HITCH

The Journal of Pop Culture Apathy

#11 • FEBRUARY / MARCH 1996 • $3.50 U.S. / $4.50 CANADA

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Indentured Servitude at Blockbuster Video

Johnnie Cochran: Help Wanted

HITCH Names Your Baby

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HITCH

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HITCH

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"The truth is, I practice absurdity quite religiously."
—Alfred Hitchcock

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EVERYTHING ELSE

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COVER
Sometime contributor William Lott experiences a Pavlov-like reaction to hot phone action.

Please send all kindhearted words, acrimonious missives and items for review to Heapin' Mailbag, c/o **HITCH**, *P.O. Box 23621, Oklahoma City, OK 73123-2621. Or e-mail us at RLott@aol.com. All mail is subject to extreme ridicule.*

GET THE HELL OUTTA HERE!

Rod,

I really enjoyed the "Get the Hell Outta Here!" travel stuff (**HITCH** 10). It brought back the cheerful memories of the many vacations I had as a youth with my father, a paranoid psychotic version of Ward Cleaver. He would never fly anywhere; we only went to places you could arrive at by car. Every year, we did the same thing: rive out to California through Arizona, see all of the piddly tourist crap and then head back by the same route. Since my dad was in control of the motor vehicle, we had to see what he wanted to see, namely...forts. The man has an obsession for forts.

And I don't mean those colonial era-type jobbers that are all nice and restored with high school kids earning minimum wage by doing "re-enactments." Hell, no! None of those sissyfied sell-out forts; my dad wanted the real-deal WWII forts. Of course, the problem was that no one else cared about them.

This basically meant that instead of the usual cleaned-up, streamlined tourist operation, we'd usually find ourselves walking into these abandoned, old, concrete bunkers where there was nobody around. Needless to say, all of this "fun" didn't kill me; it just made me stronger.

One vaguely happy memory I have of all of those hellish "vacations" was "The Thing!" Not the alien critter from that John Carpenter movie. Every year when we would pass through Arizona we would see these signs that read, "The THING! Mystery of the Ages!" and "The THING! What is it???" One year I finally succeeded in pestering my dad into stopping so we could find out. It turned out it was some kind of mummified guy. Human? Alien? Or something else? My father promptly shattered my juvenile euphoria by telling me The Thing was probably a fake since it had no kneecaps.

David Moncrief
Houston, TX

Señor **HITCH**,

I have to respond Brian Lundmark's account of Prairie Dog Town ("Next Freak of Nature: 5 Miles," **HITCH** 10), a place that I and my family have been to. I have a different take on it. Picture me and my sister in the back seat, screaming to pull over to see the world's largest prairie dog. Now picture us screaming because my parents didn't pull over. Picture family fight in minivan. Well, on the drive home, I was sleeping when we pulled over. I looked around, and it appeared that my parents felt guilty about not stopping the first time. Now picture me and my sis screaming with delight at mutant cows. This happened. I also bought what could possibly be the sickest souvenir in the world. It's called a "Kansas Turd Bird," and is some weird, shellacked cow pattie with pipe cleaner legs and goo-goo eyes. I still have this.

Brian Musial
San Diego, CA

WWW.SUCKUP.COM

Dear Rod,

It was nice to read on the "HotWired" site about a magazine that has the same ethos as *Spy*. *Spy* used to be great. Now it has a good article or two, but the replies to the "letters to the editor" are contrived and not nearly as devastating as they used to be.

Andrew Breitbart
Los Angeles, CA

Rod,

Your web page is a work of art, and your subtitle is one that I wish I'd thought of for my zine. I loved the issue of **HITCH** that I ordered (#7); the *Planet of the Apes* was so spooky to me as a kid. I barely was able to outrun them in my Steve Austin mode.

Chip Rowe
Chicago, IL

Mr. Lott,

I attended OU as an undergrad and am now attending Washington State University (God only knows why) to receive my master's degree in structural engineering. I'm sure you are thrilled to know that I am continuing my education. However, my point was that I infrequently used to read *The Oklahoma Daily* and upon reading, I would occasionally get to view your columns. Needless to say, I enjoyed the humor.

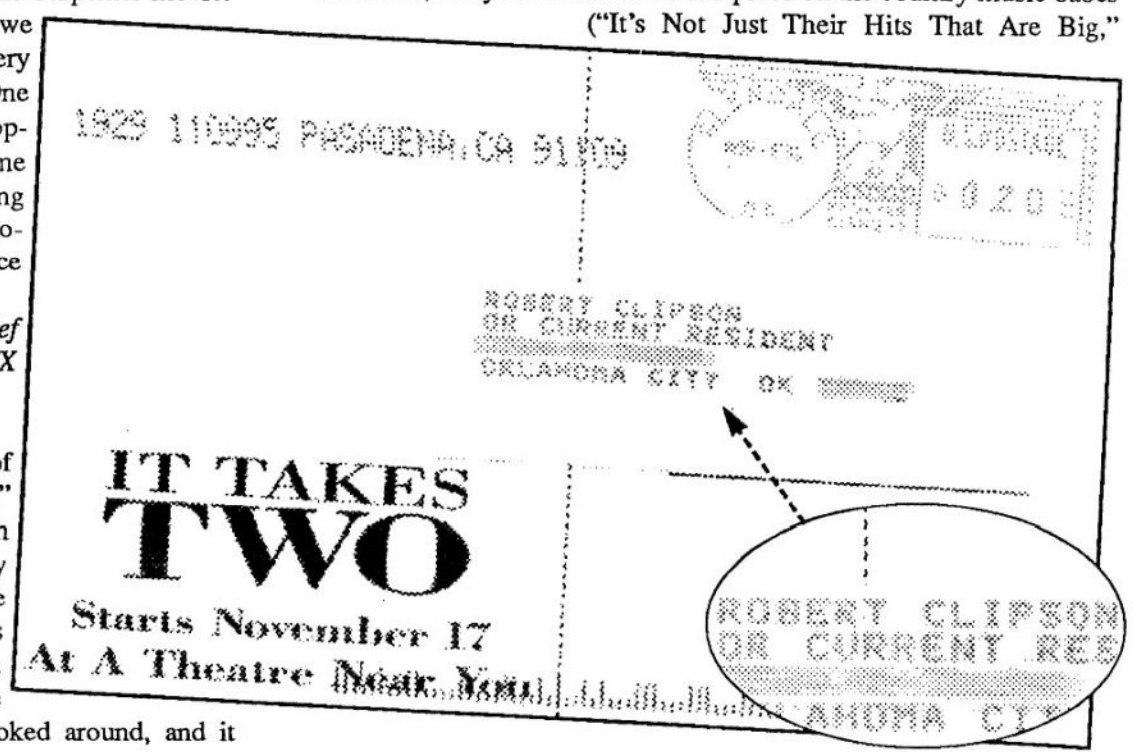
Recently, before I left, I was introduced to a zine called **HITCH**. It happened to be the David Hasselhoff issue. Needless to say, I enjoyed the humor. Then, I noticed that you, Mr. Lott, were the creator. I was intrigued. I was told to look for the web page to get information on subscribing, and here I am. Hopefu'ly, if I can find a stamp, I will be.

Brian Tucker
Pullman, WA

Rod,

I find the contents of your web page slightly disturbing.

That said, tell your wife I loved her piece on the country music babes ("It's Not Just Their Hits That Are Big,"



HITCH 9). I've noticed that for a long time myself. Hell, you can see as much skin on CMT as you can on MTV these days.

You were right! The XTC tribute album is indeed very good ("Now Ear This," **HITCH** 10). I really dug the travel theme in the same issue, and I sincerely want to thank you for bringing back Shannon Tweed ("The Tweed-O-Matic"); that was a nice touch. You may want to consider dropping any future Anna Nicole Smith exposure and replace her with Shannon Whirry. Just a thought.

Another piece in *Factsheet 5*, huh? It was probably funnier than the first one, and I laughed heartily while leaning my narrow ass against the map section at Barnes & Noble.

Dwain Henry
St. Mary's, GA

Hi Rod:

I went to the book store and actually *bought* a copy of **HITCH** 10. Tried to move the stack from its back row place to the front row, but was constantly thwarted in this effort by hovering store personnel, dammit. I liked "STATS: Your Rectum, Your Friend" (and I wouldn't read anything into that, if I were you), the Pope comics and "Good to the Last Saudi" (zany foreigners really get me to laughing). So, good work and keep it coming.

I found **HITCH** to be a great read. I am a fan of the absurd, and have no fear of ever running out of things to say or write about as long as human beings inflict us with their bizarre ideas. Speaking of which: In reading your web page, I saw the Mentos write-up. Those Mentos ads are the most surrealistically bizarre mind-fucks ever to be broadcast on anything outside an Eastern-bloc prison camp re-education loud-speaker.

J.T. Haynes
Oklahoma City, OK

Rod,

I enjoy **HITCH** Online. Will buy **HITCH** subscriptions for X-mas gifts. Good luck and keep 'em coming.

John Scariano
Albuquerque, NM

Readers, you can learn a lot from this man.

THE URINE INVESTIGATION THAT WILL NOT DIE

Hi, Kellogg's sugar cereal investigator!

I agree fully with what you are saying on your homepage ("Snap, Crackle, Piss," **HITCH** 6) and I believe that it's your mission here in life to tell the world about it. I think you started great. Keep on teaching. I have said this to my friends many times, but they laugh at me. It feel very good to have somebody on your side.

Freddie
a Swede in South Africa

Yo Roddy Baby, your exalted Rodliness –

Dear Rod:

I request your total attention on this matter. Lately, I have been wondering about an unsolved mystery from many years ago: the Bunny Man. With so many zines covering so many different kinds of crime stories, it would seem that somebody besides me must have also wondered about this mystery. There have been so many books written and so much speculation about the motives and identity of Jack the Ripper. Doesn't the Bunny Man deserve some attention, too?

I don't know if he was ever caught. If not, he may have gone on to commit more crimes in other disguises. He might have been shot and killed. Or, he might still be living today, and could come forward and confess, if the statutes of limitations have run out. Anyway, Rod, I call this strange story to the attention of you and your readers, to see if anyone else remembers it or knows more about it.

I am renewing my subscription because I think **HITCH** has something for everyone, including myself.

Fred Hamilton
N. Myrtle Beach, SC

'Bunny Man' Hops, Chops In Virginia

United Press International

FAIRFAX, Va. — A hatchet-welding "bunny man" is creating consternation among Fairfax County, Va., police. He now has struck twice in two weeks.

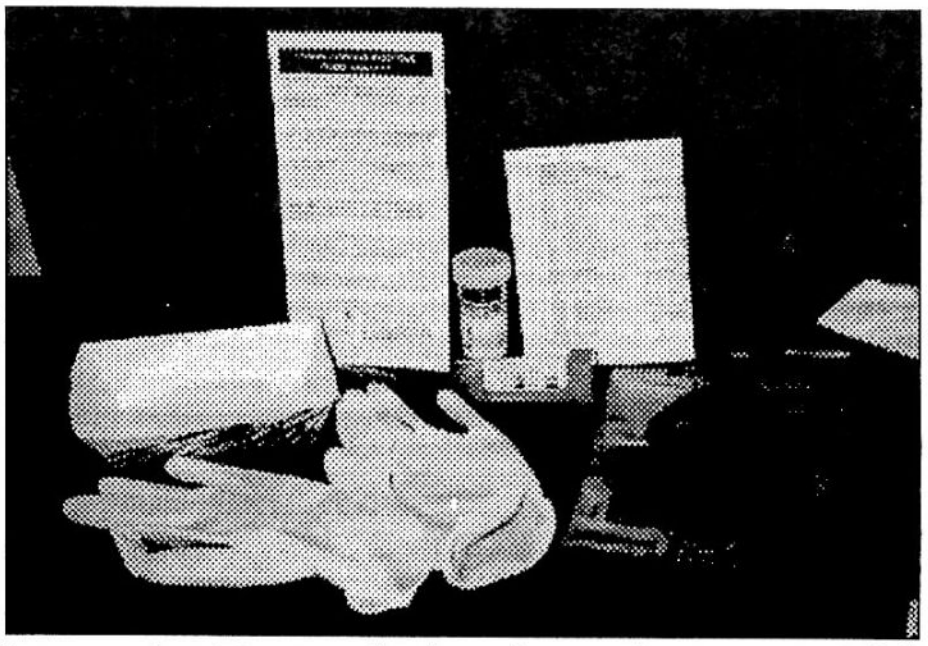
A security guard at a new housing development under construction in this Washington, D.C., suburb told police that he came upon a man clad in a white bunny suit with floppy ears whacking away at a porch post of one of the unfinished houses Thursday night.

When the guard approached, he said the Alice-in-Wonderland figure warned: "You are trespassing. If you come any closer, I'll chop off your head."

It's been so long since I've been in the Heapin' Mailbag, I'm having withdrawal pains, so a couple of things:

#1: There's this fellow at Kinko's named Tony who claims to write for **HITCH** and yet I see no articles by Tony. This Tony dude asked my friend (let's call him Plofty) who was working on a zine if he had ever heard of **HITCH**. Plofty said, "Why, yes, my friend's brother writes for **HITCH**." Tony told Plofty that he wrote for **HITCH**, too. Now, Rod, considering your disdain for the evil entity that *is* Kinko's, could you *possibly* have one of their apron-wearing employees contributing to your fine publication?

#2: You printed a picture of me in the Mailbag in **HITCH** 8 standing by Hitch Blvd...and you cropped off my legs! I thought they were the finest part of the photo, but...you're the king. I figured, "No legs allowed in the Heapin' Mailbag." Then, to my chagrin, what do I see in the Mailbag of **HITCH** 9? *Legs!* What does a girl have to do to get her legs in the Mailbag, kind sir?



#3: Regarding your delightful article "Federally Funded Fun Facts" (**HITCH** 9), you mentioned that you learned a doctor can give you a stool sample kit you can use at home. You are correct, sir! Enclosed is a photo of an *actual, at-home stool sample kit* (pre-use, of course) for your viewing pleasure. I thought I'd point out a few things in the photo: First, the box to the left is what my doctor's office furnished for the actual stool collection. My mother noted that it looked like a French fry container, and I'll be gosh-darned if it didn't say "Food Services" on the bottom. Eeyuch!

Secondly, I found it most disconcerting that the bag supplied for shipping the stool (poo-poo) sample in was marked "BIOHAZARD." I know you're aware of the Sugar Smacks in the pee thing, but were you aware that your feces were biohazardous?

Amy Lynn Hunt
Oklahoma City, OK

Amy, #1: I didn't need another reason to hate Kinko's, but thanks for alerting me to this situation. This man is a liar, no surprise given his employer. Do me a favor: Take something there to copy, tell Tony you need 10,000 of them, and then leave. Be sure to leave your name as Bob Clipson. #2: Probably more than you're willing. #3: So what are those cool gloves for?

THE USUAL

Hey, Rod "The Bod" Lott!

One word: *Krazy!!!* **HITCH** 9 was the best issue so far. **HITCH** is the greatest periodical

on the face of the earth. As of said reading, I have donated four gallons of blood. I made 100 cool ones! Plus cookies and orange juice! Rad!

I can't decide which is the most creepiest photo ever printed: Grandma on pg. 10, or Pirate Boy on pg. 17. But definitely *not* the Marky Mark/Calvin Klein Studboy pics on pg. 18.

Rod, you are one loced-out gangsta G on the funky phat mack-daddy flava tip! Word, Holmes!

Louis Fowler
Oklahoma City, OK

Rod:

Hey, we got our **HITCH** in the mail just last Friday. I must say I was pretty impressed.

Ian Smith
Beaverton, OR

Okay, Rod,

I will now shower you with lovely compliments and comments on **HITCH** 9. I *really* liked the open letter to the people who stole your washer (I used to have a boyfriend who used the phrases "I seen" and double negatives and such artfully constructed sentences that ended with "don't it?"). Call me your typical teacher's daughter, but bad grammar makes me cringe, too. And Jerry Garcia died on my birthday. I thought it was a pretty nice present.

Your awesome writing talents really shined in "I'm Going Down to Cowtown." I went to one of those a few months ago in Denver, but it wasn't as entertaining as the place you went to! Needless to say, I laughed my socks off and I think this was my favorite article.

I also thought your fake band listing was a hoot. Just goes to show how stupid most musicians are! And that Leona Helmsley letter ("Dear Mr. Clipson:")! Makes me feel like writing to big companies again. Back in college, I used to write to food companies praising their product and how good it tasted and I would get lots of free coupons back. Except for Pepperidge Farm. All they sent were 20-cents off coupons. Stingy bastards. I will never buy their overpriced cookies again.

Is that you in "Brief Encounter?" Scary. I've never donated blood ("Plasma Donation"), but at times of absolute bankruptcy, thought about it. My old boyfriend gave plasma in his "crazy, violent punk rock homeless days" to buy alcohol and cigarettes. I also liked Joe Rogers' "Joe a-Go-Go."

I don't have a TV or VCR, so I'm afraid I can't check out any of the cool movies you've listed until: a) I get rich, b) my boyfriend gets rich, or c) my parents get rich and buy me a TV for Christmas.

Julie Peasley
Boulder, CO

Or, d) shoplift from Blockbuster.

Rod,

Saw your listing in *Factsheet 5*. I'm in prison in a redneck town in Georgia, and I'm *broke!* You can help out by sending a copy of **HITCH**.

Bill Ippert
Glennville, GA

I choose not to help, Prisoner Bill. Murder, rape and robbery (or what have you) do not qualify you for free copies. It can, however, get you on staff.

Dear Rod:

A mutual acquaintance of ours tipped me off to your zine the other day. I was gosh-darn happy to hear that you were writing for the general public again, being as your columns and stuff in *The Oklahoma Daily* were far and away the best reading I did during my early years at OU. Around these parts, it's not often you find a columnist/writer who actually has a clue. And can actually write.

I truly dig your zine. I'm told you've been publishing **HITCH** for over a year now, and why I didn't get wind of it earlier, I'll never know. Best of luck keeping your barrel o' absurdity afloat, and remember: A good editor uses the word "weasel" as often as possible.

Michael D. Milner
Norman, OK

Thanks, weasel.

Rod,

I got **HITCH** 10. Good stuff. The phrase "high up your anus" ("STATS: Your Rectum, Your Friend") makes me laugh at random times. I mean, "up your anus" wouldn't have been as funny. That "high" just makes it perfect.

Greg Galcik
Lancaster, PA

Rod –

Thanks loads for the copy of **HITCH** 9. I particularly loved your Monkees (or, rather, half of 'em) piece ("Last Train to Jerksville"). Davy has always seemed like a half-pint shithole to me. And although Mickey was a fave during my younger days, the fact that he's personally responsible for the birth of Ami Dolenz – without question, the most vapid straight-to-video bimbette of the '90s – has cast a shadow over his already-debatable comedic talents.

Additional kudos to your Jerry Garcia/Deadhead obit. I only wish I'd said it first.

Steve Puchalski
New York City, NY

Dear Mr. Lott,

Your "Celebrity Suck-Up" article in *Factsheet 5* was one of the funniest pieces I've read this year, and I hope you can put more stuff into *F5*. Since I can't count on that, I'm subscribing to your mag.

Tom Hronik
Cedar Rapids, IA

Hi Rod,

Got *Factsheet 5* and liked your article, so now I'd like to get **HITCH**, too. Funny how things work like that...

David Hopkins
Japan

Rod,

How goes it? Just wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed the last ish of **HITCH** that I got from you! It rules! I also enjoyed your article in the latest ish of *Factsheet 5* about interviews. Very entertaining. Good job!

I rented *El Cid* starring that ham o' hams, Chuck Heston! I really enjoyed it! Then that god-awful *Clueless* with Alicia Silverstone. Please kill her! Oh, well...enclosed is $4 for ish #9. I am especially looking forward to yer article about Cowtown in Wichita ("I'm Going Down to Cowtown") and the stinky Amish folk.

Send yer zine as soon as you can, K? Plus maybe a small packet of that good ol' Oklahoma red dirt!

Take care and thanx for putting out such an enjoyable zine.

Dennis Dysfunctional
Hutchinson, KS

Dennis, while I enjoy reading your kind letters, I must ask you: Why do they reek like a pack of Kools?

WE'VE MOVED!

And we don't want to lose touch with you (or those subscription checks)! Next time you write us, be sure you use our new address!

...and that new address is...

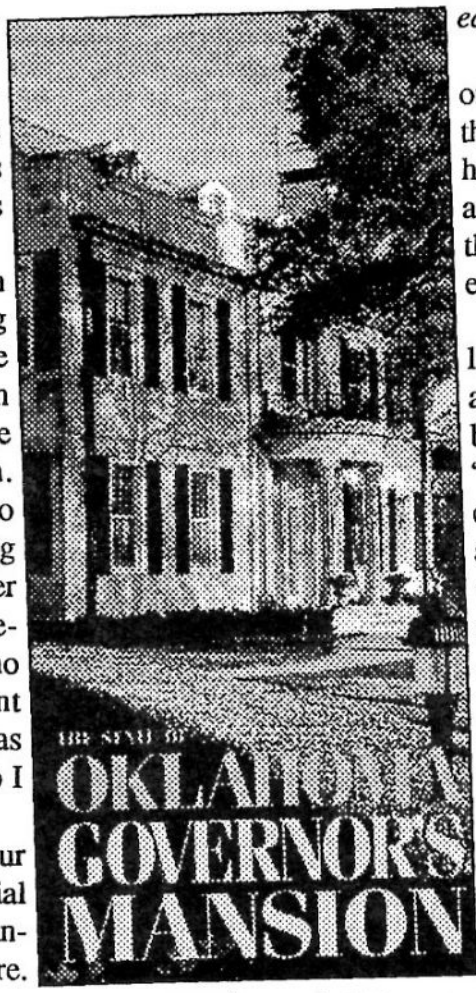
HITCH
P.O. Box 23621
Oklahoma City, OK 73123-2621

A HE-MAN ADVENTURE

The Governor's *Casa* Es Su *Casa*

By Rod Lott

By putting up with all those pesky indictment charges thrown at him while he was in office, former Oklahoma Gov. David Walters was, for that reason only, a he-man. So it was only fitting that I visited his public home – known to us peons as "the Governor's Mansion" – before his term was up.



Having driven half an hour through the pouring rain, risking my life on the storm-slicked roads from Norman, I arrived at the mansion at exactly 1 p.m. one solemn weekday. Two of the nerdiest-looking security guards I've ever seen – decked out in state-issue hooded ponchos, no less – opened the front door for me, where I was told to sign in. (Why? Do I get a mailer?)

Then, one of the tour guides, the cute and cordial Toni, handed me an explanatory, informative brochure.

"Welcome to the Governor's Mansion," it bellowed. "Notice its many outstanding features such as the smooth limestone walls, sculpted ceiling moldings, and elegant furnishings. We hope you will appreciate the home's dual role as our family's residence and as a public showcase for the State of Oklahoma."

But only from 1 to 3 on Wednesday afternoons. Excluding holidays. And don't even think of entering anywhere else but the west gate, bub.

Aside from a handful of the guides, I was the only one there under the age of 70, what with all the small-town Baptist church groups in attendance and all. My tour group consisted of two old women and an old man, all of whom were Texans and, as it turned out, easily impressed by Formica. We were first shown the living room, and the women commented, "Oh, how *lovely*," as they did upon entering *each and every room.*

The guides seemed to be on the defensive with me throughout the tour. Perhaps it was because I kept asking, "Did they pay for this out of their own pockets?"

We strolled into the library ("a quiet, comfortable room," cried the brochure, as if the term "library" didn't automatically suggest such an atmosphere), where we were told that the books are selected and switched out each month. The volumes are picked according to the family members' specific reading tastes.

I glanced at the titles: *Collected Shorter Poems*, *How to Be Funny* (unread, I suppose), *What Flower Is That?*, *10,000 Years of Fashion* and, my favorite, *Faking It.*

In the dining room, we stared with open mouths at the U.S.S. Oklahoma punch bowl, on temporary loan from the Oklahoma Historical Society. "A striking focal point of the dining room," quoth the brochure. And how!

The guide showed us the mansion's official china, affixed with the state seal. Said she, "I believe we are the first state to put our seal on the official china, so I think that's something we can be proud of."

Yeah, screw education reform and anti-crime legislation; we've got the kick-ass kitchenware.

From the sun room, one can see the swimming pool in the shape of the Sooner State. (And the panhandle is a Jacuzzi!) I shuddered to think about the First Couple's intimate evenings alone in the water. Behind the pool is the helicopter pad, where the kids enjoy waving good-bye to their father as he departs via chopper...or so our guide said.

For the garden, First Ladies get to pick their favorite type of rose, which is then planted *just for them.* Our guide noted that Mrs. Walters had yet to pick out her rose. *C'mon, Rhonda!* I thought. *Get on the ball! Do you want a reputation as a slacker?*

"One day this summer," the guide said while we waited in the dining room for the arthritis-ridden group ahead of us to move on, "David and Rhonda were outside talking to people and shaking their hands and getting their pictures taken until *9 o'clock*! Of course, you know they're *much* too kind

to say they had other things to do, and by the time they got in at 9, dinner had already been served and cleared away! They didn't get to eat that night to all!"

Gee, I hope all of us "little people" realize the injustice we've done. For Chrissake, where in the state constitution does it say the leader is forbidden to make his own damn sandwich?

"I have a question," I said, if only to stop the ladies from open discussing the plates.

"Well, I hope I can answer it," the guide said, probably expecting me to ask, "Don't you simply *adore* this pattern?" So it came as no surprise to me that she was stumped when I asked, "When the kids are here during these tours, like in the summer, what do they do?"

She couldn't answer. She called Francis over to try to explain. After much babbling, Francis said, "Well, usually I believe their schedules are adjusted so they're out shopping."

"So they're not like, locked in a closet or anything like that?" I said.

"No," Francis replied. "I don't believe they've ever been locked in a closet."

Upstairs in Dave and Rhonda's bedroom, which just gave me a creepy feeling altogether, we were promptly instructed – nay, *ordered* – not to touch or sit. If we obeyed (and we did), we would be allowed to see the newly renovated bathroom.

Said this guide, "I think it's very tastefully done, don't you?"

Oh, yeah. The glass shower allowed us a rare, draw-your-own-conclusion look into the couple's private life, but I think someone should've removed Rhonda's leg razor from the tub before the civilians were let through.

Adorning the den were several family pictures, including the whole fam on the beach, frolicking in the sun, sand 'n' surf of an indictment-free paradise off some exotic coast. There were pictures *everywhere*, the scariest of which depicted the three Walters daughters posing amongst giant bunnies.

Not all the governors have allowed "tourists" into the living quarters, the guide was eager to make clear.

"Well, you tell them that I think it's nice that they did," commented the women in my group, who clearly need a hobby.

Hell, for the state taxes I pay, I should be allowed to peek in his underwear drawer.

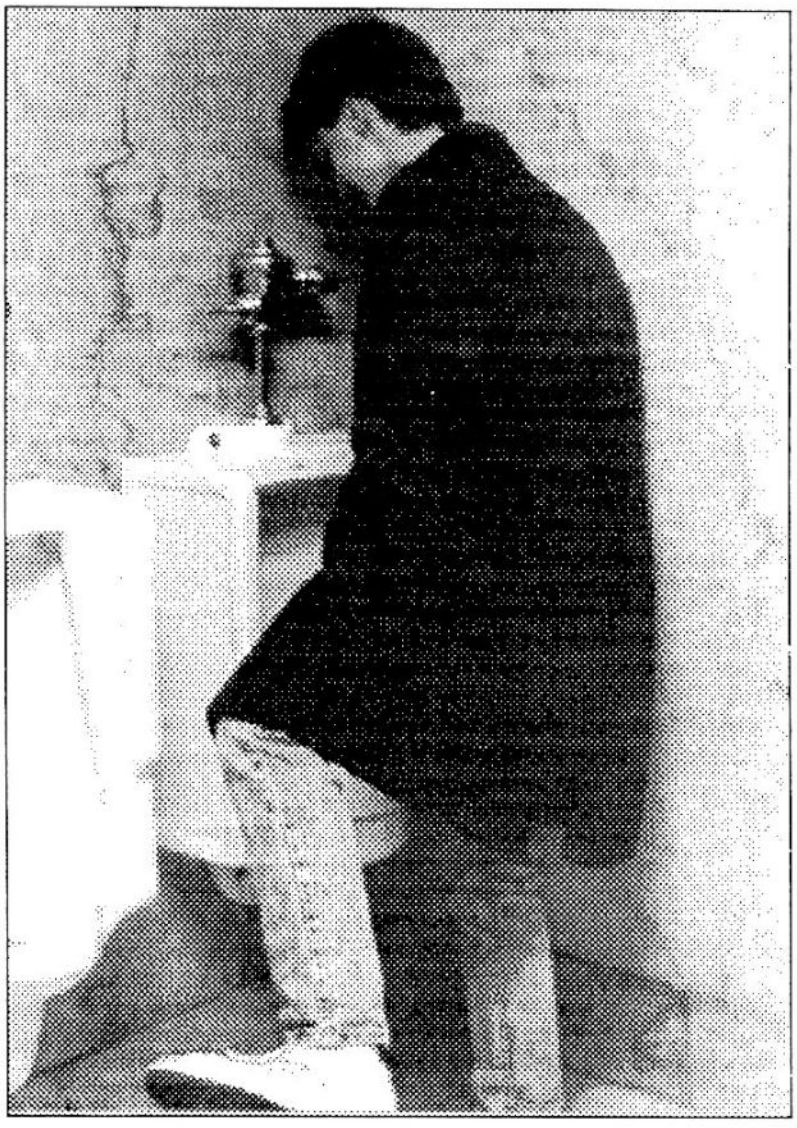
After the kids' rooms (which were all roped off; oh, come on! What could be worse than a leg razor?), the kitchen and the gov's own office, we were shown the final stop: the guest bathroom. Our guide for this last leg of the grueling, 20-minute safari that is the mansion tour said of the restroom, "It's not just to look at. Feel free to actually use it if you'd like!"

Surprisingly, no one in my group cared to urinate in the gubernatorial bowl. (Actually, given the long drive ahead of me, I needed to, but feared I'd leave wayward drops, so I simply stopped off at the Capitol restroom across the street, where, it is known, senators piss freely all over the walls.)

Thus, the tour concluded and I, graced by the sheer extravagance of it all, departed.

By the way, regarding those descriptive brochures: Some 10,000 copies were prepared and distributed at a cost of $5,100 to you – the Oklahoma taxpayer – so feel free to get your money's worth and grab as many as you'd like.

H



Rod contributes to the government.

Capitol Chicken

The premise: The governor's got a massive hankerin' for some greasy fried chicken.

The solution: Krispy King Chicken, mere steps away from the gov's mansion.

KKC has long been a staple of Oklahoma City's Capitol district, so after a visit to our lawmakers' place of business, Joe Rogers and I decided to make an impromptu stop to see what all the fuss was about.

This is what we found:

1. Friendly, smiling workers ready to serve you.

2. A sign that threatens customers with the threat of death by shotgun.

3. White meat costs twice as much as dark meat.

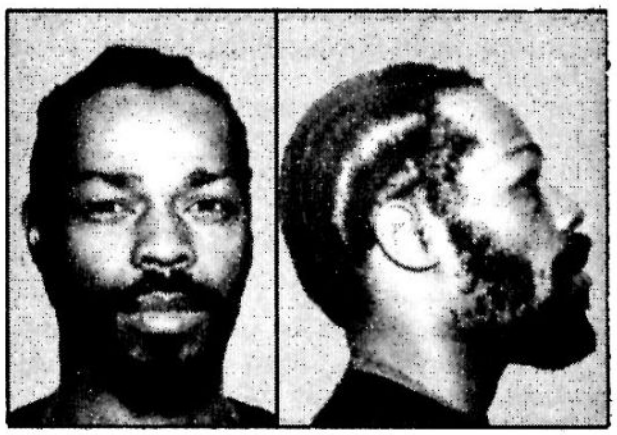
We cry racism!

WIN $$$!

The FBI's Fugitive of the Month

WANTED

For Interstate Transportation of Explosives, etc.



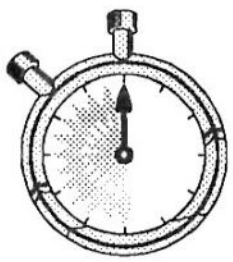
Melvin Edward Mays

ALIAS: Maumee, Maumie
DOB: 09 / 07 / 57
BIRTHPLACE: Chicago
HEIGHT / WEIGHT: 5'9", 165 lbs.
BUILD: medium
HAIR: black
EYES: brown
COMPLEXION: dark
RACE: black
SOCIAL SECURITY: 354-56-8017
IDENTIFYING SCARS: None, but missing several upper left front teeth and stutters when talking.

I suspect that this month's fugitive is going to cause much confusion among the general populace. I fear that people will look at his picture and mistake him for that gangsta rapper Snoop Doggy Dogg that all the kids today like so much. Snoop, if I may call him that, is currently involved in his own trial, while this man remains at large. Please, I implore our readers, do not let this misunderstanding get in the way of Mays' capture. For one thing, Snoop doesn't have that wicked moon-shaped thing in his hair. Plus, "Snoop," although a dumb name at any rate, holds more street credibility than does "Maumee." Seen him? Call FBI HQ at (202) 324-3000.

The Robert Goulet

DEATH WATCH



Approximately 26 years remaining

(oh, the suspense!)

Whilst enjoying 16 fluid ounces of that tart treat known as Fruitopia Raspberry Psychic Lemonade, I noticed something unusual regarding the liquid's ingredients. There, among the syrups and sucrose, was a listing for "cochineal extract."

Never a walking dictionary, I consulted the nearest lexicon and found that the word "cochineal" means: "a red dye consisting of the dried bodies of female cochineal insects."[1] These insects, known to nerds as *Dactylopius coccus*, are "small red cactus-feeding" vermin.

My first and only reaction: *Am I drinking bug parts?*

So I hurriedly dialed the Coca-Cola Company's consumer information line (1-800-755-7559) to get to the heart of the matter. I was greeted by a friendly woman named Christie. After telling her I had a question about Fruitopia, I flat out said, "'Cochineal' means bugs, Christie. America is drinking bugs."

Reading from something in front of her, she assured me that although the extract is indeed retrieved by the crumbling corpses of these insects, it has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration. Since the extract is the only natural red colorant known to man, it is commonly used to alter the colors of various drinks, including the company's pink, ruby red, strawberry and peach lemonades, as well as grapefruit juice and other Fruitopia flavors.

In addition, millions of women smear this bug stuff all over their lips daily, as cochineal extract is also an ingredient of lipstick, Christie said.

"But it's safe?" I asked.

"Oh, yes! It's been approved by the FDA!" she reminded.

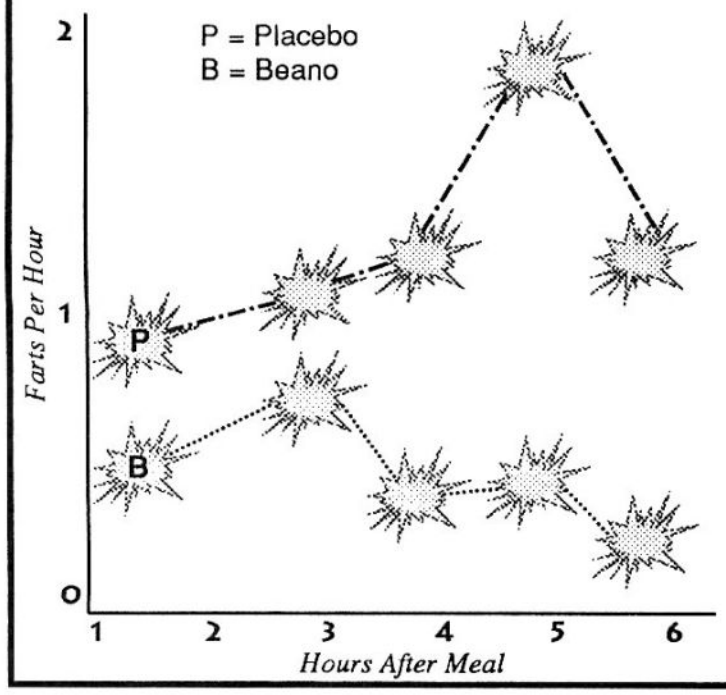
"Yeah, but they've approved other things that I wouldn't consider safe," I said, which provoked a laugh from Christie, which did nothing to allay my fears.

Interestingly, some bottles of Fruitopia read, "There is a wonderful person inside you who is dying to get out." What they don't tell you is that it once had six legs, sprouted wings and could've laid thousands of eggs in your lower intestine. —*Rod Lott*

[1]Mish, Frederick C., ed., *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary – Tenth Edition*, Springfield: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1984, pg. 220.

STATS

Tootie Fruity



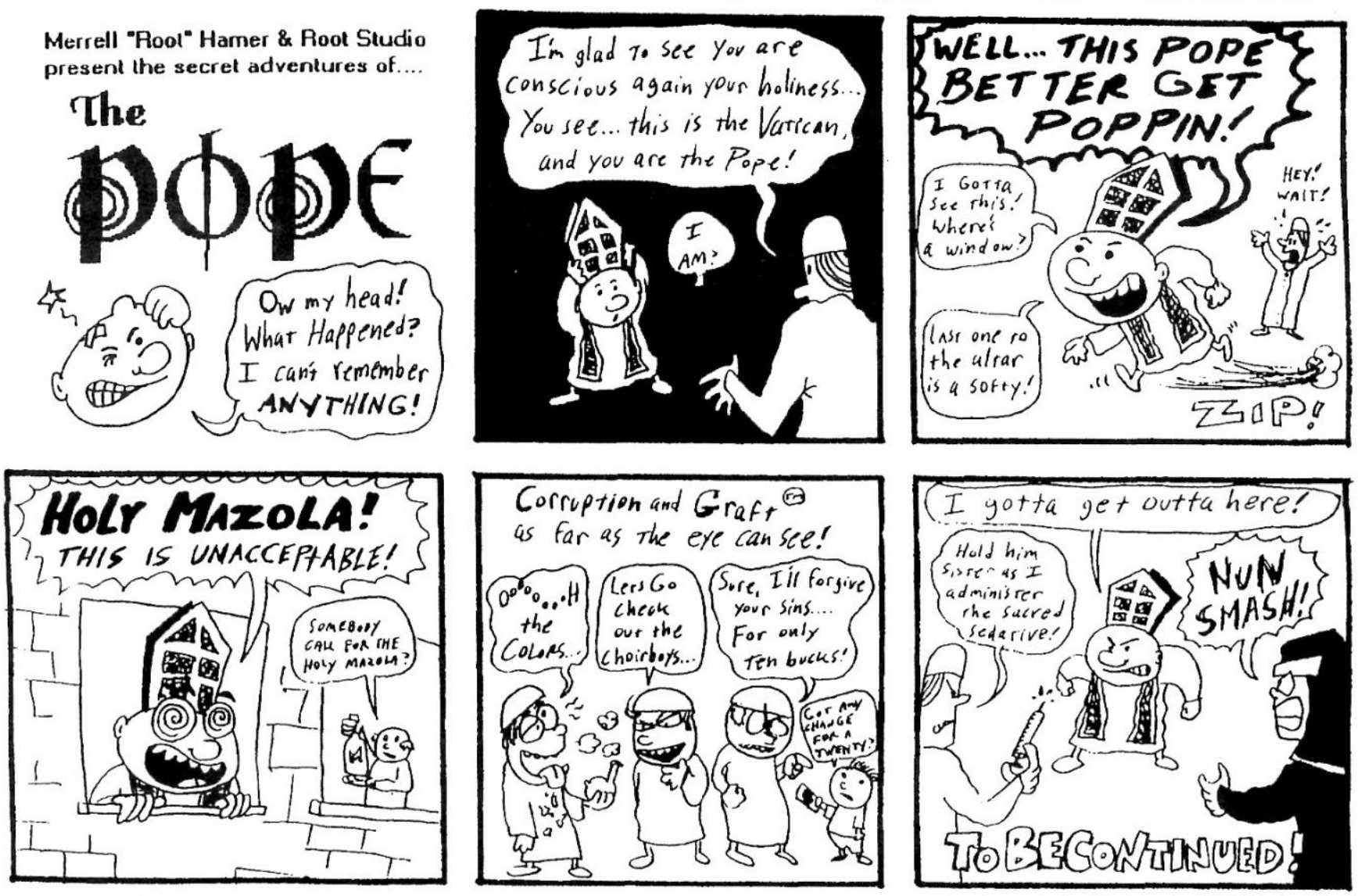
Gather round, kids, for another rousing chorus of one of the most enduring campfire tunes: "*Beans, beans, they're good for your heart / The more you eat, the more you fart...*"

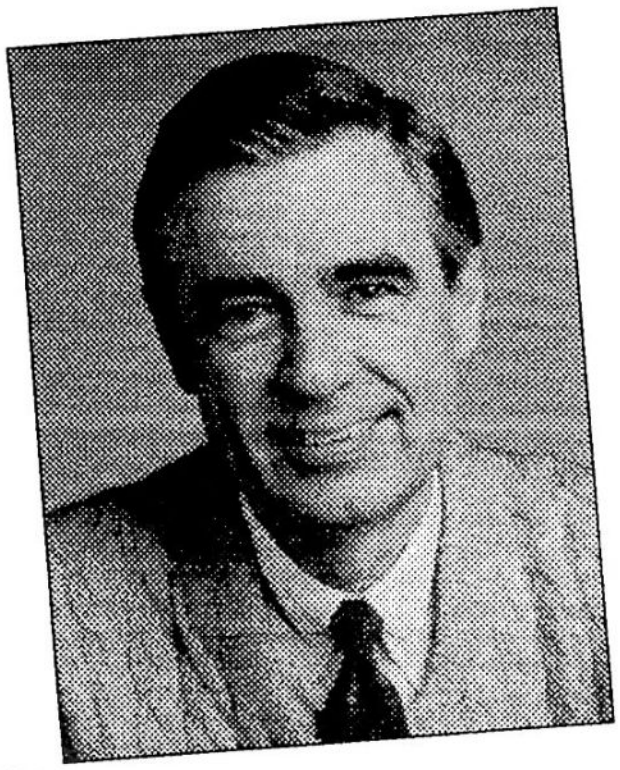
And oh, how truthful that schoolyard lyric is. A relatively new product, however, is supposed to curb one's propensity to expel gas after eating a meal of legumes. In 1994, a study put the product – known as Beano – to the test. Serving a meal of chili made with beans, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and onions (leading me to believe they should've tested Breath Assure while they were at it), the team of researchers had their subjects (mostly coworkers) count the number of post-supper anal explosions.

Based on the graph at left, you can see that Beano lived up to its promise. Perhaps most notable among the team's findings is not that Beano actually worked, but that "For others, however, the production of high volumes of resonant, pungent intestinal gas is a source of personal pride and fulfillment and can be used as a greeting or other form of communication."

It is amazing to think that a Ph.D. got paid to write draft such a sentence, much less invest the time to examine his colleagues', um, tootelage.

—*Rod Lott*


Merrell "Root" Hamer & Root Studio present the secret adventures of....
The POPE
Ow my head! What Happened? I can't remember ANYTHING!
I'm glad to see you are conscious again your holiness... You see... this is the Vatican, and you are the Pope!
I AM?
WELL... THIS POPE BETTER GET POPPIN!
I Gotta See this! Where's a window?
HEY! WAIT!
Last one to the altar is a softy!
ZIP!
HOLY MAZOLA! THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE!
SOMEBODY CALL FOR THE HOLY MAZOLA?
Corruption and Graft ™ as far as the eye can see!
Oooo...H the COLORS...
Lets Go Check out the Choirboys...
Sure, I'll forgive your sins.... For only ten bucks!
GOT ANY CHANGE FOR A TWENTY?
I gotta get outta here!
Hold him sister as I administer the sacred sedative!
NUN SMASH!
TO BE CONTINUED!

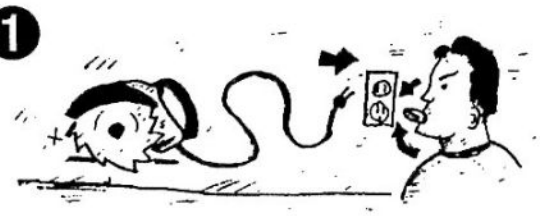


MISTER ROGERS' Playtime Fun Tips

Hi, little boys and girls. Your good friend Mister Rogers is here to tell you about some very *special* new games for you and your little friends to play, using only simple household items that your mommy and daddy are probably hiding in your kitchen. Let's get started, shall we?

"Fun Playcave"

❶



❷

❸

❶ Go into your father's garage and get a very sharp saw. It helps if the saw is powered by electricity, for it will make your building time less, and your playtime more. Plug the saw into an outlet. But before you do, test the outlet with your tongue.

❷ Cut some branches off of your parents' trees. Four or five will do.

❸ Get a large trash sack and get inside. Have a friend tie the ends, so you will be inside the "bubble," if you will.

❹ While you are inside, have a friend staple, nail or screw the branches to the sack. Enjoy! You and your little friends can make-believe you are pirates, robbers, cave goblins or whatever you'd like.

❹

"Fun Chemistry Set"

❶

❷ Get some drinking glasses from the cupboard. Stack books and stools if they are hard for you to reach.

❷

❸ Mix the liquids up into pretty colors in different glasses. You and your friends can enjoy these special drinks.

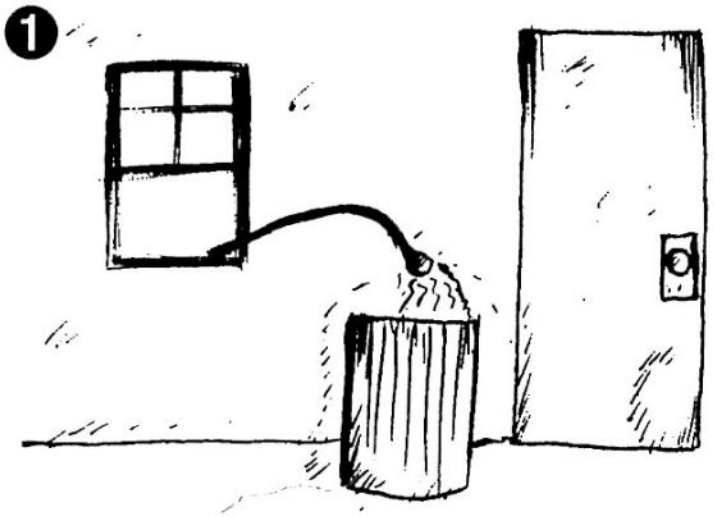
❸

❶ Gather liquids like bleach, drain cleaner, ammonia and gasoline from under your sink, way up high in the kitchen cabinets and in the garage. Look for a scary skeleton face on the label; if you see one, grab it up!

"Fun Martian Traps"

Kids, there are three different Martian traps you can use to foil those bad spacemen that invade your bedroom and want to give you rectal probes. You can set them up in your closet because that is where the Martians hide when you are sound asleep.

❶



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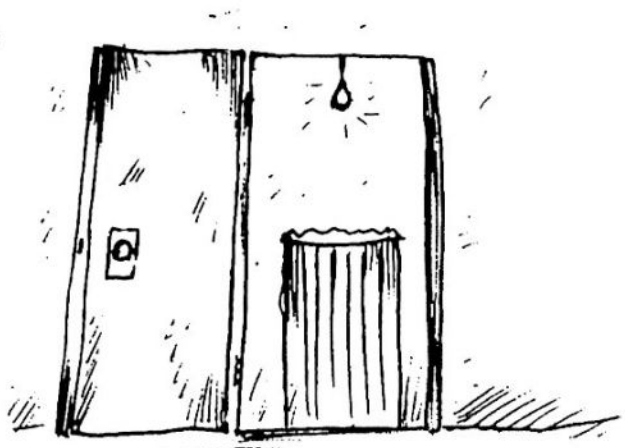


❶ Put the end of your garden hose through the window to your room and fill a trash can up with water.

❷ Cover the top of the full trash can with Saran Wrap. Use all of it so it's real tight and secure. Tape it down.

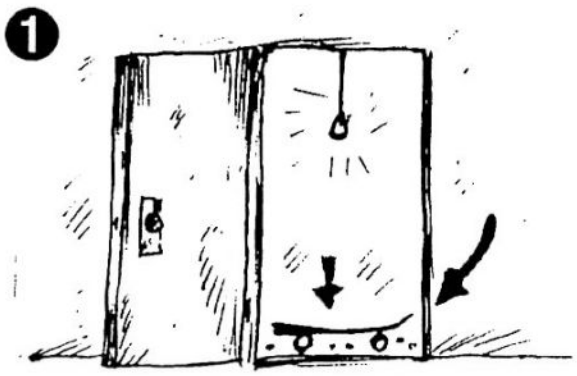
❸ Put the trash can in your closet. Everyone knows that Martians can't swim. They will drown and turn blue and die. Then you and your little friends will have your very own dead Martians! Enjoy!

---

❶ Put a bunch of marbles and your skateboard on the floor of your closet.

❷ Gather large, jagged rocks and put those all around the closet, too. When the Martians enter, they will slip on the skateboard and marbles, hit their big heads on the sharp rocks and snap their necks. Be sure to clean up all the green blood so your mommy and daddy won't get mad and make you sit in the corner. That would take away from your playtime with your new little dead Martian friends.

❶

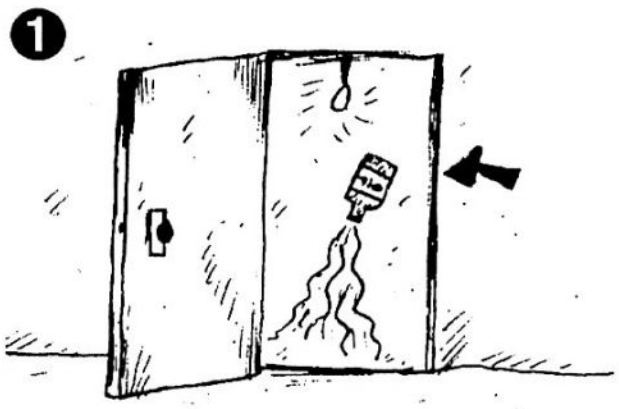


❷

❶ Get some motor oil from the garage. Pour it all over the closet floor. Three or four quarts will do.

❷ Nail steak knives to the floor and walls of your closet. When the Martians enter, they will slip on the oil and impale themselves on the knives. Remember again to clean up the green blood. You and your little friends can then enjoy playing with your new dead Martians.

❶



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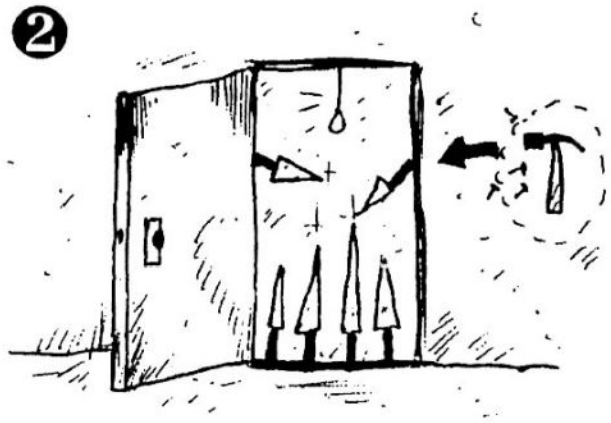


Tom Neesnan's Belated Movie Reviews

Tron (1982)
Rating: 9 1/2 out of 10

This techno-thriller stars a man I remember from another film. Video Pac-Man games are becoming popular, and what would it be like to get zapped into one? I once asked myself what it would be like to be a Scrabble piece, but never a Pac-Man game; I don't believe I have the creativity! Nonetheless, this film was good! It had racin', dodgin', fightin' and some lovin'. In two words or less: See *Tron*!

18 Again! (1988)
Rating: 9 1/2 out of 10

This switcheroo-dandy is very, very good! Prove it, you say? No problem. This fine film, entitled *18 Again!* due to the content of the film, stars the old man from *Oh, God! You Devil.* The film is a switcheroo like no other. When the old man gets into a car wreck, he gets his wish and inhabits the body of his 18-year-old grandson, and oh my, is he one funny 18-year-old! If I could be 18 again, I'd go bowling!

Vice Versa (1988)
Rating: 9 1/2 out of 10

This film with Swoozie Kurtz made my funny bone hurtz! Ha ha! I said that to a man coming out of the film. In this switcheroo comedy, there is a body shiftin' like none seen before! The pops turns into the boy and the boy turns into the pops! I couldn't believe my eyes! I thought I was seeing something truly wacky and, in fact, I was! I will see this film again soon, and find out the mystery of body transferal!

Like Father, Like Son (1987)
Rating: 9 1/2 out of 10

One thing I must say before I tell you about a doozy switcheroozie. I have a friend named Abe who is a Sac and Fox Indian. In this unique film, the man from that one Santa movie plays a busy executive. He drinks an Indian potion and is switched with his son, who is younger than he, and therefore, must act differently or appear odd! He does appear odd at times, however, as that is one of the key components of the film. Be sure to order pop at the concession stand, not Indian transferal serum!

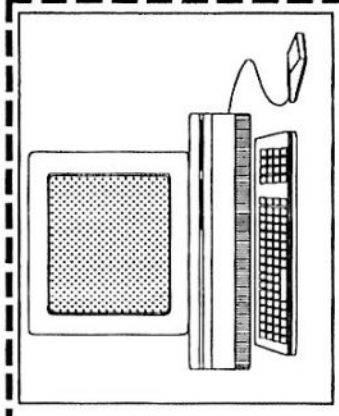
Ask Dr. Murphy, ROBODOC

Dr. Murphy is a family practitioner in Boise, Idaho. A father of two, he is a graduate of Harvard Medical College, president of the Idaho Medical Association and can singe things with his left eye. He is a cyborg.

Dear Dr. Murphy: I am impotent. Although I am very much in love with my wife, to whom I have been wed for nearly 14 years, I cannot achieve an erection. Are there any medical treatments available to cure my problem? —James S.

Dear James: Your problem is not an uncommon one. Many a middle-aged human male like yourself suffers from this embarrassing problem, most cases of which are not psychologically rooted. I presume you have already tried sex counseling, and found that it failed you. Hormone replacement therapy is one option, and a painless one at that; however, it is effective only in those with severe testosterone deficiency.

Therefore, I recommend either penile injection therapy or penile implant surgery. With the former, you inject drugs into your penis, attaining an erection that can last for a time span of two hours. Scarring or fibrosis may occur, but to those men yearning for erections, these side effects are worth it. With the latter, two plastic rods are inserted into your member. When you are preparing for intercourse, simply grasp your ajiefmlll..ss83, skkkkkkfJ8** SYSTEM MALFUNCTION SYSTEM MALFUNCTION SYSTEM MALFUNCTION.....REBOOTING ROBODOC v.2.4...ONLINE...DISK SCAN NORMAL...SYSTEM CLEAR...and if that, too, does not work, come to my office and I will singe the affected area with my left eye. I am a cyborg.



HITCH Goes Digital!

Relive some of HITCH's greatest moments and cheapest depths on the totally renovated and continually updated HITCH Online! Fun! Free! Do it at work!

http://www.ionet.net/~twilken/hitched.shtml

SAID

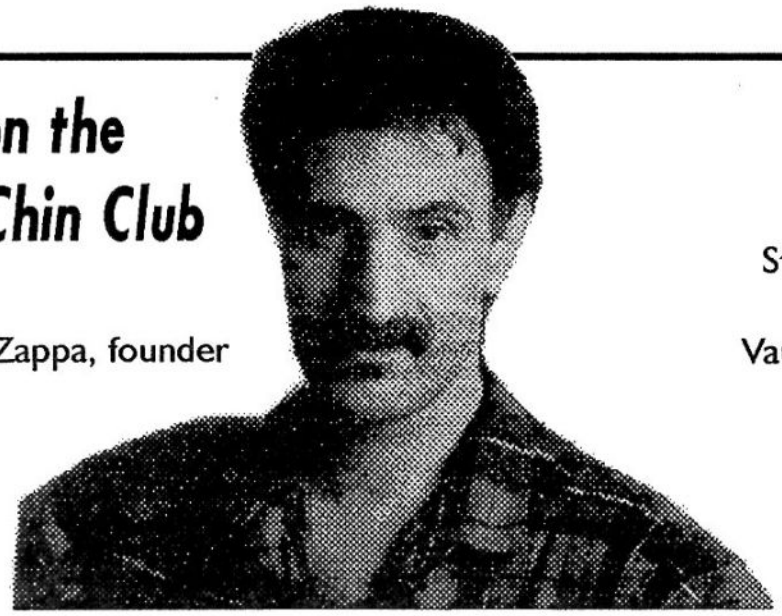
"Don't forget that we need to check to see if they have a Coolio Christmas album for sale."

—portly white woman at Blockbuster Music

HELP
SPREAD THE WORD

Say **NO** to deceptive alien entities.
For FREE stickers send self-addressed stamped envelope to:
V2, Box **911**, Stanwood, WA 98292.
Fear not.
Spread the Word.

The Thing on the Tip of the Chin Club



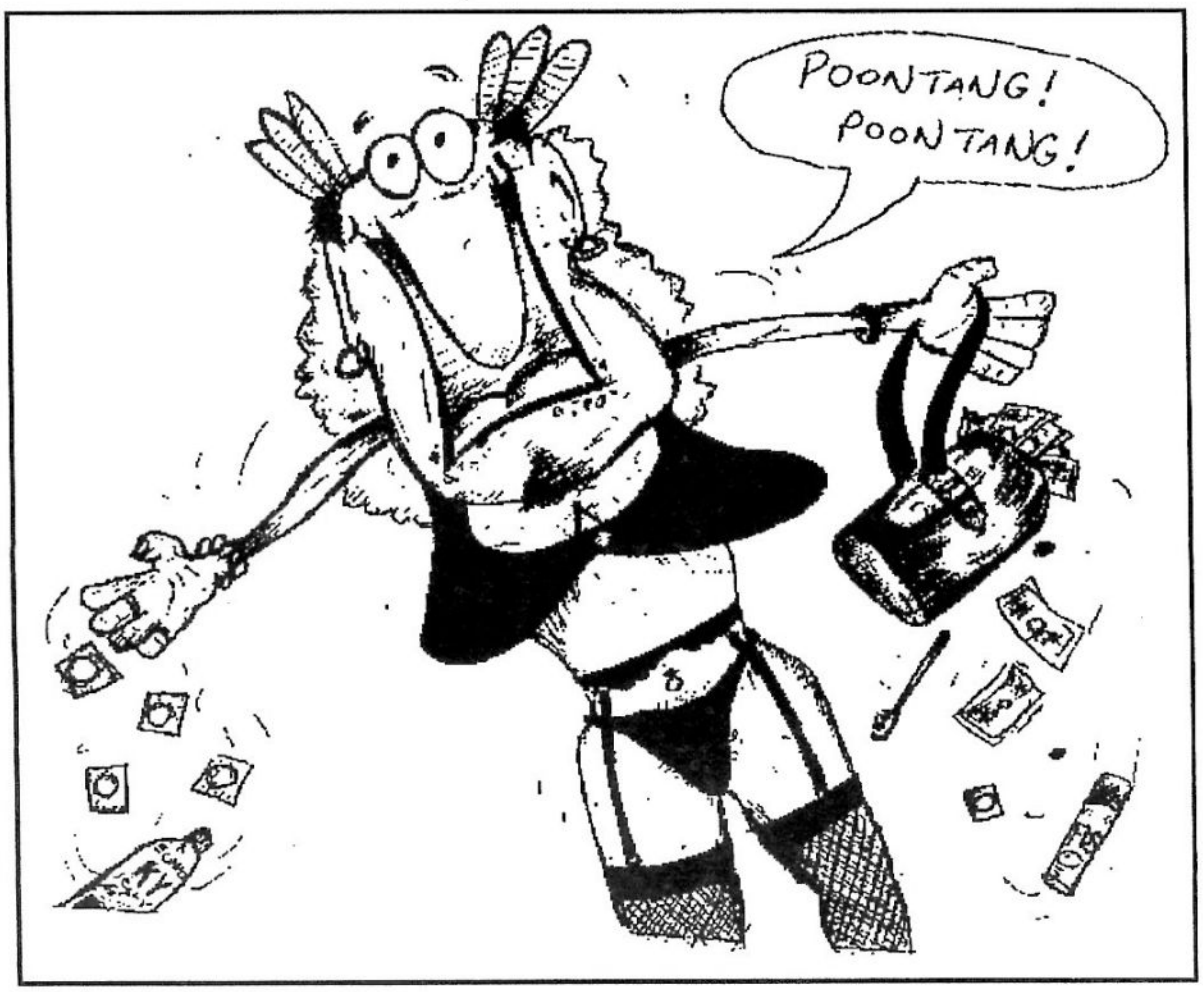
Frank Zappa, founder

Stevie Ray Vaughn

Lenny Kravitz

Kevin Kline

Princess Di (newly initiated)



Little Skeezer's Escort Service

Too Late

In what seems like an 11th-hour attempt at saving a failed series, the Fox network is holding a contest to rename its sitcom, the currently titled *Too Something*, starring two guys you've never heard of and never will. Assuming the show will still be on by the time this comes out (or, for that matter, the contest's end), here are **HITCH**'s suggestions: 1) *Mercy Schedule-Filler*, 2) *You'll Want to Hurt Us*, 3) *The Fun-Free Show*, 4) *Kill Us. Kill Us Now.*, 5) *Big Fucking Dorks.*

So what do we win?

SAID

"Yeah, I'm thinking about going to law school, so I've gotta get my GPA up to a 3.0."

—frat boy

"Do you have that new Stephen King movie *Liz Claiborne*?"

—confused patron of Blockbuster Video

Baby-Naming Made E-Z!
It's the HITCH

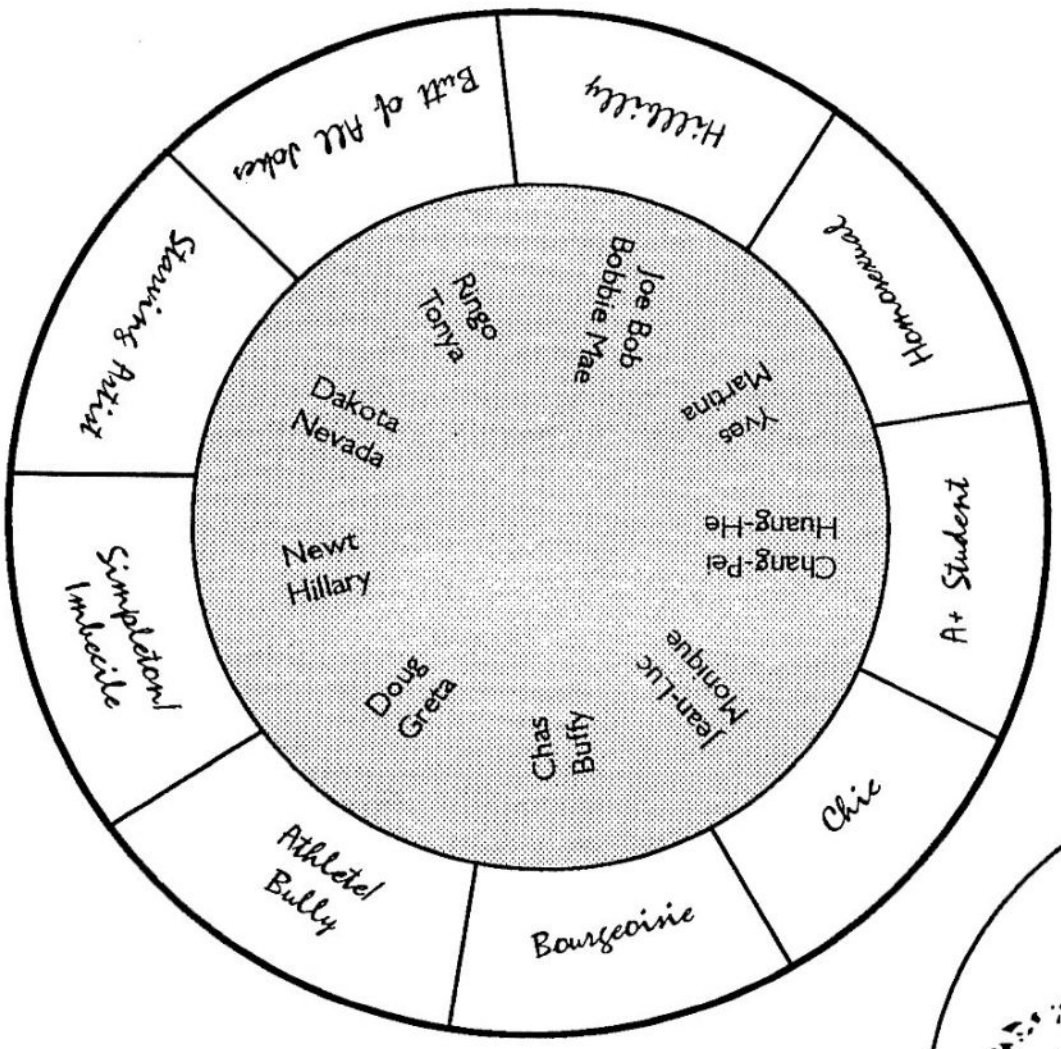
Orb O' Appellations

So you're having a baby and haven't yet settled on what to name the little progeny? By no means make the decision a hasty one, as the name you christen your offspring with is a serious matter. It does more than simply give people something to call the child by – it can actually affect the personality your child will have throughout his life.

However, this frightening naming responsibility isn't necessarily to be regarded with trepidation. It is without question your only opportunity for you, the parents, to capitalize on getting the most out of your creation – to predetermine the essence of your lucky toddler.

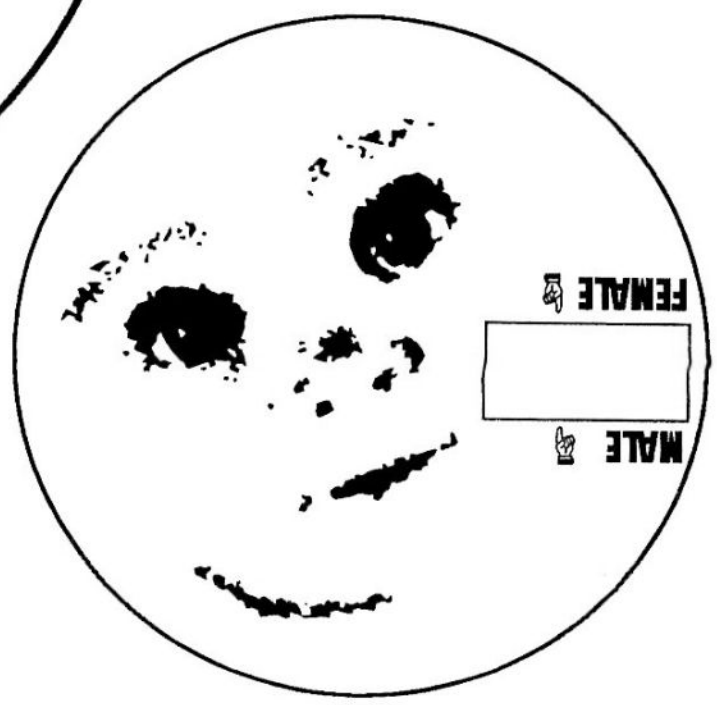
And to make things easier, we friendly folks here at **HITCH** have painstakingly assembled this handy Orb O' Appellations to guide you along. First, refer to what sex your child will be (you *have* gotten that ultrasound videotaped by now, haven't you?) and then – this is the fun part – decide exactly *what* your child will be. Considering DNA manipulation is not as technologically advanced as we'd like it to be, this is your only hope!

—Joe Rogers and Rod Lott



INSTRUCTIONS FOR ASSEMBLY

1. Cut out wheels.
2. Cut out box on small wheel.
3. Place smaller wheel on top of bigger wheel so that the gray area is covered.
4. Stick tack in middle (approximately between baby's two nostrils).
5. Nomenclature time!



"Dear Mr. Clipson:"

July 17, 1992

Cheryl Glenn
Assistant Manager, PR/Promotion
Baskin-Robbins
31 Baskin-Robbins Place
Glendale, Ca. 91201

Dear Ms. Glenn:

I wrote to you earlier this month, and once again I deem it necessary.

If you'll remember correctly, I was the one who wrote to you with the question about your new flavor "A League Of Their Own Big League Chocolate." Not only did you answer my question promptly and thoroughly, but you also included a coupon so I, as you said, could "enjoy a Big League Sundae on us." How kind! Thank you!

In fact, I redeemed the coupon last night, right in the middle of Bill Clinton's big speech! (Can you believe it? All that talk about family values made me hungry for good old fashioned ice cream!) I did not choose your new flavor for my two-scoop sundae however, like you had intended and I hope this is not a problem with you. Instead I got cookie dough and Reese's peanut butter cup ice cream and apologize if I abused the specifications of the coupon. But that is not really why I am writing.

This is: the girl who made my sundae is a cute one. I think her name was Heather. Do you know her? I've been a widower for some years now and would like to get back into the dating world. Therefore, I am thinking of asking Heather out. She seemed to enjoy my brief company and witty conversation. But I want to make sure this is not a violation of some corporate policy, to have an employee go out with a coupon-holder. I can see how this might constitute a conflict of interests. I would hate for my friends to think the only reason I got a free sundae was because I was dating one of the workers! You know how people talk! I would also hate for the girl to lose her job over this, what with our country's recession and all. (Bill Clinton talked about the recession last night. He says he will get America going right again. I say that's just fine, but then I left for ice cream.)

I realize you are a busy woman, but if you could take the time to answer my question or forward it to a more appropriate department, I would be forever grateful.

Thank you kindly,

Robert Clipson

Robert C. Clipson
[redacted]
Oklahoma City, Ok. [redacted]

P.S. If you were the one who came up with the idea for the "A League Of Their Own" tie-in, then you're batting a thousand! It's a great idea and I wish you would do it more!

You could have done the same thing with that John Claude Vandame movie "Universal Soldier." I don't plan on seeing the movie (too violent I'm sure) but you could have made a flavor called "Universal Chocolate Soldier." I know this idea is a little bit late but maybe you all can use it if a sequel rolls around next year.

Baskin Robbins.

Baskin-Robbins USA, Co.
Corporate Headquarters
31 Baskin-Robbins Place
Glendale, CA 91201
Phone: (818) 956-0831

July 29, 1992

Mr. Robert C. Clipson
[redacted]
Oklahoma City, OK [redacted]

Dear Mr. Clipson:

Thank you for your interest in Baskin-Robbins. We are pleased you received the sundae coupons (which were not limited to use for a "Big League" Sundae only).

With respect to your question regarding Baskin-Robbins' employees, I am not the appropriate person to answer that question. Baskin-Robbins is a franchised operation. Therefore, each store is independently owned and operated. The owner of the store would decide all rules and regulation regarding their employees.

I am very pleased to hear that you are a "fan" of the "A League of Their Own" promotion. Look for more exciting promotions at your local Baskin-Robbins in the months to come!

Once again, thank you for your interest in Baskin-Robbins.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Glenn
Assistant Manager,
PR/Promotion

Spanking the Mormon

"Satan never gives up. You can win this fight! The joy and strength you will feel will give your whole life a radiant and spiritual glow of satisfaction."

Though a perfectly natural human behavior, masturbation is apparently frowned upon *big time* by the Mormons. As they've set forth in one of their tracts, those who jerk off must be "cured," as the act is a "sinful habit that robs one of the Spirit and creates guilt and emotional stress. It is not physically harmful unless practiced in the extreme. It is a habit that is totally self-centered, and secretive, and in no way expresses the proper use of the procreative power given to man to fulfill eternal purposes. It therefore separates a person from God and defeats the gospel plan."

Whatever. Here now, for those of you poisoning your soul, are a few tips to keep you from going south. They are culled from *Steps in Overcoming Masturbation* (pun most certainly unintended) by Mark E. Petersen, Council of the 12 Apostles, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

✘ Never touch the intimate parts of your body except during normal toilet processes.

✘ If you are associated with other persons having this same problem, you must break off their friendship.

✘ When you bathe, do not admire yourself in a mirror. Never stay in the bath more than five or six minutes.

✘ When in bed, dress yourself for the night so securely that you cannot easily touch your vital parts, and so that it would be difficult and time consuming for you to remove those clothes.

✘ If the temptation seems overpowering while you are in bed, *get out of bed and fix yourself a snack*, even if it is in the middle of the night, and even if you are not hungry, and despite your fears of gaining weight.

✘ When the temptation to masturbate is strong, yell *stop* to those thoughts as loudly as you can in your mind and then recite a prechosen Scripture or sing an inspirational hymn.

✘ Make a pocket calendar for a month on a small card. If you have a lapse of self control, color the day black. The calendar becomes a strong visual reminder of self-control and should be looked at when you are tempted to add another black day.

✘ When we think of something very distasteful with something pleasurable, but undesirable, the distasteful thought and feeling will begin to cancel out that which was pleasurable. For example, if you are tempted, think of having to bathe in a tub of worms, and eat several of them as you do the act.

✘ During your toileting and shower activities leave the bathroom door or shower curtain partly open, to discourage being alone in total privacy. Take cool brief showers.

✘ Keep your bladder empty.

✘ Reduce the amount of spices and condiments in your food.

✘ Wear pajamas that are difficult to open, yet loose and not binding.

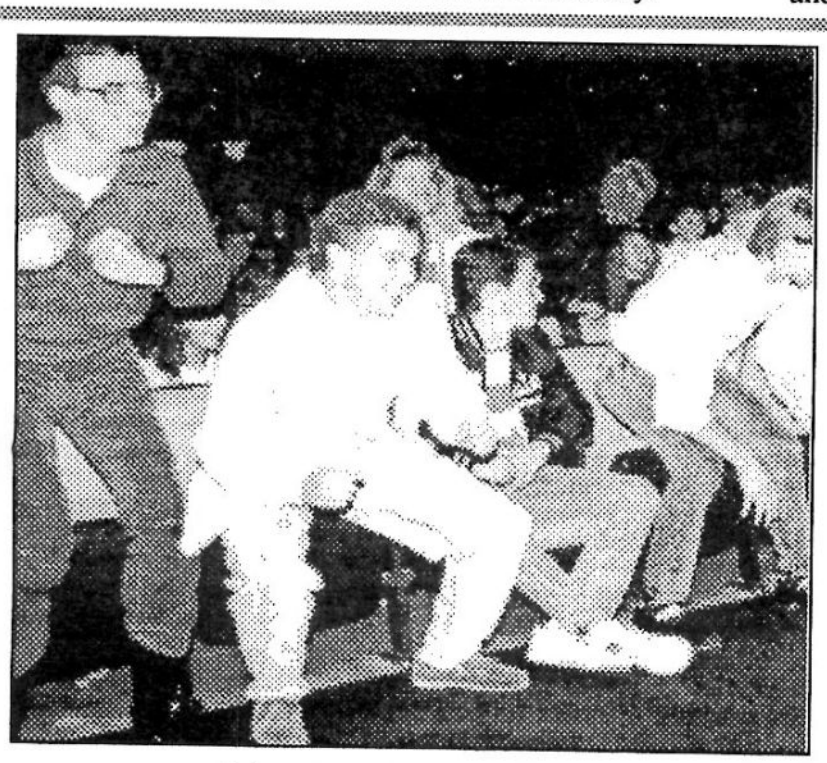
✘ Avoid people, situations, pictures or reading materials that might create sexual excitement.

✘ It is sometimes helpful to have a physical object to use in overcoming this problem. A Book of Mormon, firmly held in hand, even in bed at night, has proven helpful in extreme cases.

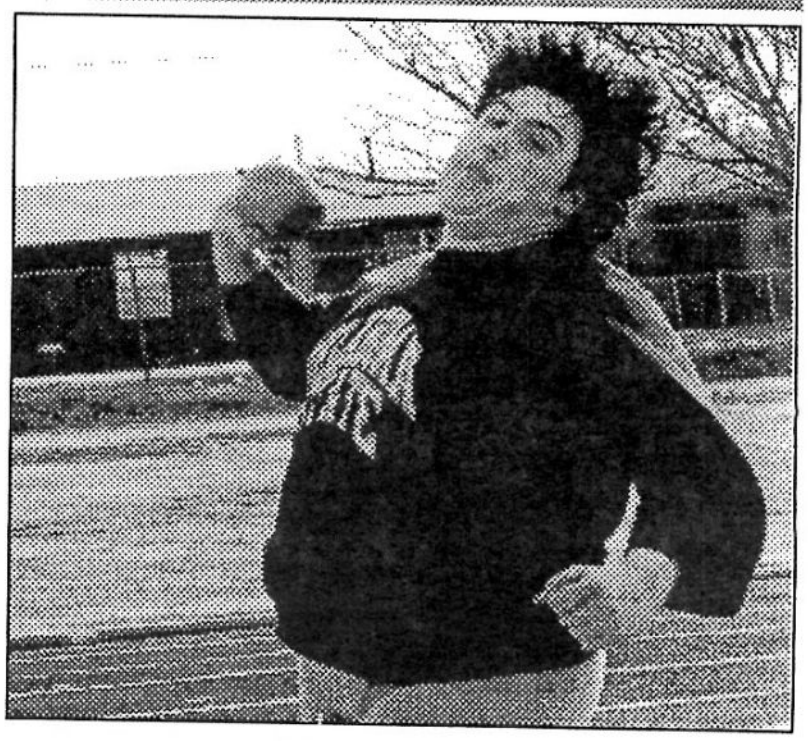
✘ In very severe cases it may be necessary to tie a hand to the bed frame with a tie in order that the habit of masturbating in a semi-sleep condition can be broken.

✘ Set up a reward system for your successes. It does not have to be a big reward. A quarter in a receptacle each time you overcome or reach a goal. Spend it on something which delights you and will be a continuing reminder of your progress. H

HITCH Paparazzi

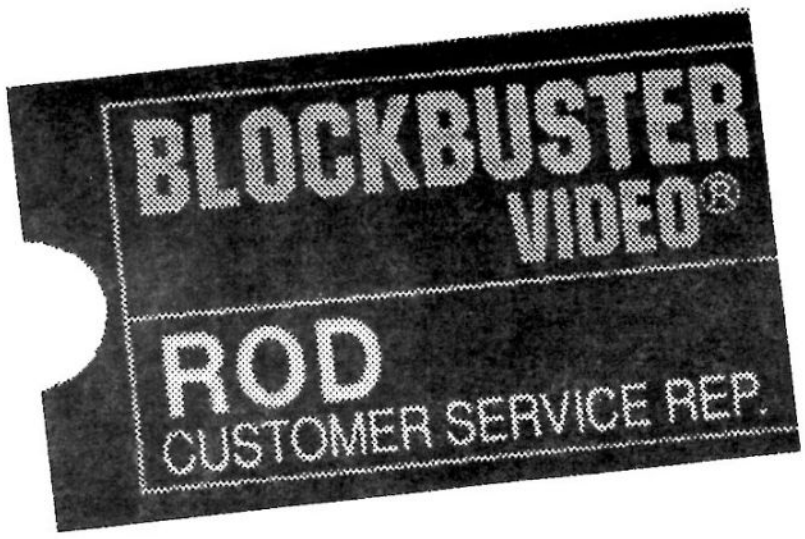


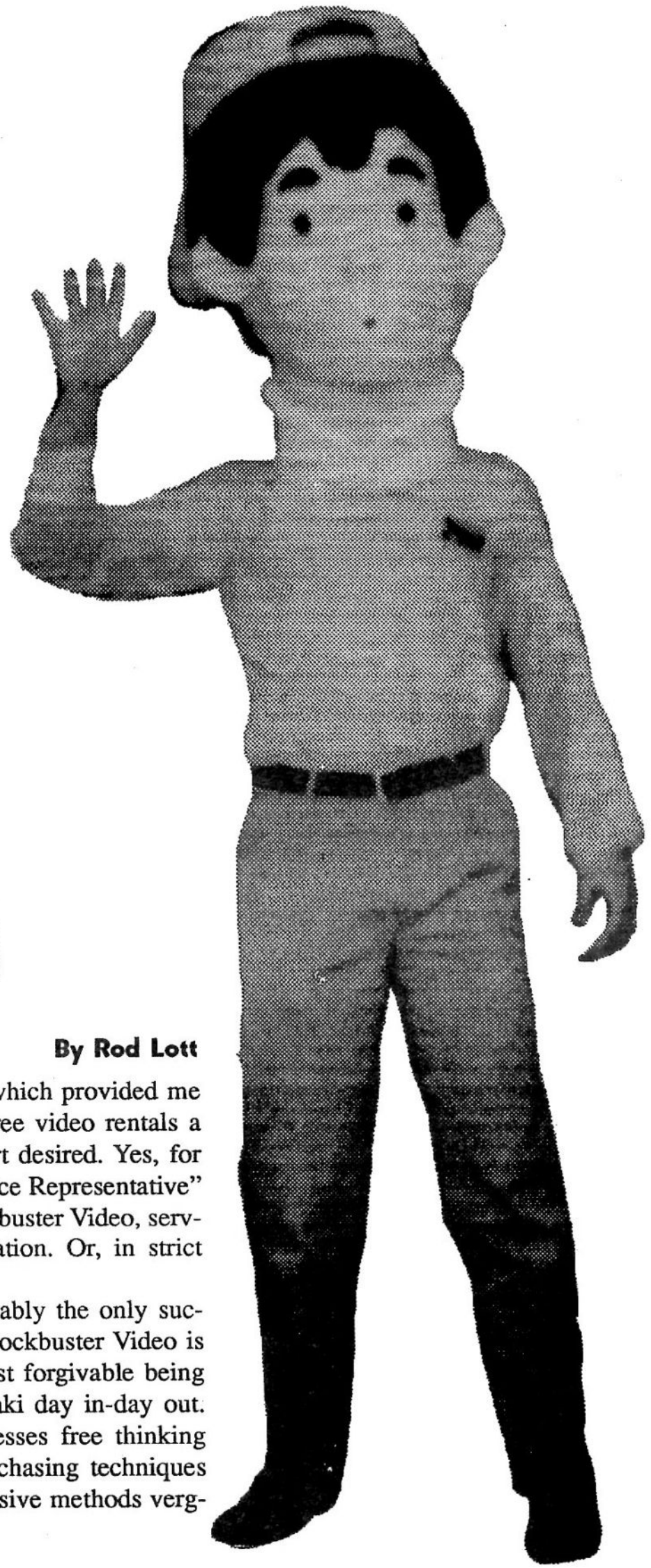
School spirit at its finest.



Heeeeeave-*ho*!

I WAS A WHORE FOR





By Rod Lott

For the better part of three years, I held a job which provided me with pay just above minimum wage, seven free video rentals a week and all the *L.A. Story* balloons my heart desired. Yes, for nearly a third of a decade, I was a "Customer Service Representative" (read: *slave*) for that all-American monopoly Blockbuster Video, serving my time at a northwest Oklahoma City location. Or, in strict bureaucratic terms, Store #40003.

The nation's largest chain of its kind and probably the only successful U.S. business begun by a garbage man, Blockbuster Video is guilty of several crimes against humanity, the least forgivable being subjecting its employees to wearing blue and khaki day in-day out. The corporation also shuns creativity and suppresses free thinking because it controls what you watch, through purchasing techniques and sheer product volume, as well as other subversive methods verging on mind control.

"Wow! What a difference!" indeed.

The main reason I applied for a lucrative spot on the Blockbuster team was simple: free stuff. And since it was free stuff I raked in, I was happy in that lone aspect, so I'll start there, on a positive note. Even better and more prized than the stacks of free posters were the free video cassettes, which fell into two categories:

1. "Screeners," or advance copies of movies, usually months before their initial video release. These were much in demand among the staff, but since my fellow CSRs had no taste, I almost always walked away with the good stuff. So while a few fought tooth-and-nail for *Daddy's Dyin'...Who's Got the Will?*, I became the proud owner of *La Femme Nikita*, and without contention, because no one else wanted to read subtitles (or, I suspect, could).

2. Preview tapes and "making of" documentaries, ranging from the actually interesting *The Making of 'Total Recall'* and the actually not *Behind the Scenes: 'Young Guns II'* to the pathetic *A Profile of Julia Roberts in 'Sleeping with the Enemy'* and the description-defying, 15-minute, "adults only" featurette look at *Last Call*, starring William Katt, Shannon Tweed's ample bosom and a well-oiled office chair.

Apparently though, *someone* falls for such pitches, since when stocking the new release shelves, the Inventory Manipulation Department of Blockbuster seems intent on living by the motto, "The crappier the movie, the more we buy." This would explain the 75 copies of *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, as compared to a paltry three for David Lynch's *Wild at Heart* and an absolute zilch when it came to cult items like *Bride of Re-Animator*.

What were they thinking? "Well, yes, we're aware *Wild at Heart* won the Palme d'Or, but *Robin Hood* has a gravel-throated Canuck belting out sappy hit ballads in the forest over the end credits."

While Blockbuster loves clocking out those rentals, it loves even more to sell sell sell. Employees are pushed to goad customers into buying videos. This could easily be accomplished, and without the goading, if only they hired people whose film knowledge extended well beyond quoting lines from *Top Gun*.

Little did I know when I signed on that I would soon be asked to compromise my moral principles and be reduced – nay, *forced* – into becoming a pimp for John Hughes, as during the fall season of 1991, when we were required to ask *every* customer to pre-order a copy of *Home Alone*. Failure to comply resulted in being "written up" by management.

5 Sure-Fire Ways to Piss Off A Blockbuster Video Employee

1. Call up during peak periods of business (evenings, weekends and holidays) and ask, "What are your new releases?"

2. Call up during peak periods of business and ask, "Do you have a wrestling tape called *WWF Ring of Terror Vol. 4*?" There's no such tape, but they'll have to look through screens upon screens of info on a *very* slow computer system to find that out.

3. Ask, "Do you have (fill in name of movie currently playing in first-run theaters)?"

4. Ask for the newest, hottest release when you know it won't be in (weekends). When they tell you it's not in the store, ask them if they'll call all their other locations in the city to see if it's available there.

5. Ridicule their uniforms.

Management was so serious about the lucrative sellthrough market that at one midnight meeting, we had to watch a training film on the matter. It starred an actual Blockbuster employee – a babe, incidentally – and her Capraesque angelic pal who magically materialized to offer her handy tips on pushing Peter Sellers tapes.

"Are there any questions?" my manager asked at the tape's conclusion.

"Yeah, which store does she work at?" I asked in all seriousness. "I'd like to date her."

Management was not amused. He then announced a sales contest, with the winner to receive "this plush *Ghost* jacket." Ooh, the motivation.

Management even went so far as to instruct us we were not allowed to tell customers if we thought a particular title sucked. Honest opinions were to be kept to ourselves if they were negative ones.

The silence didn't end there. With home office fearing controversy, we were not allowed to divulge to customers the plot of *Problem Child*. We were not to utter anything along the lines "misbehaving adopted kid" because Blockbuster did not want an angry backlash from area adoption agencies, as if lame John Ritter vehicles have the propensity to spark chaos and havoc on the level of the Watts riot. We even had to take the poster down, by God!

I was amazed they kept the movie in the store at all. Citing grounds that they were "America's family video store," Blockbuster refused to carry films such as *Henry & June* because of their NC-17 rating. Yet head to the "Miscellaneous" section of almost any Blockbuster and you can check out *Best Chest in the West* (parts one *and* two, no less).

Thus, arty fare like *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* was pulled from the inventory because of its dreaded rating, yet much more graphic titles – including many sweat-drenched Shannon Whirry fuckfests – are welcomed with open arms as long as they're unrated. Most recently, Blockbuster proudly upheld its tradition as the ethical judge for all of America as it "oversaw" a re-editing of MGM/UA's *Showgirls* until they deemed it "acceptable" to place in its stores.

Yet Blockbuster will tell you it's another firm believer in that old adage, "The customer is always right." This is untrue, as the customer is almost always an idiot. Quite frankly, they're damned ignorant and annoying, and you could time the store's waves of business with the monthly issuance of welfare checks. A solid majority of customers complain (if not outright lie) about late fees on their account. Sure, the fees are overpriced, but if you're willing to pay money to see *King of the Kickboxers*, you're dumb enough to pay for *anything*.

Customers often asked for titles that do not exist (*The Smallest Mermaid in the World*, *Harry Loves Sally*, *The Great Baker Brothers*, *Sweet Magnolias*), but more often saw fit to offer their unprovoked film commentaries, all of which were wrong.

Said one spoon of *Joe Versus the Volcano* – a film heavy on symbolism and literary references – "That there was the dumbest movie. It was sooo bad, didn't make a lick of sense. Now *Hard to Kill*, there's a good movie! That there was just about the best movie I ever done see!"

A small consolation to such rampant mediocrity was that I was allowed to stock the "Manager's Picks" section with my personal choices. Needless to say, they rarely rented. The very few customers who took my recommendations, who rented *Blood Simple* and loved it, were also the ones who would skip town with one of the store's VCRs. When our copy of *After Hours* was stolen, I begged my manager to order another copy.

"Sorry, there's not enough room for it in the budget," said Mr. Corporate Suck-Up, unpacking a box of 40 *Days of Thunders*.

Regardless, I did my best to contribute, albeit unnoticed. When the store was honored with periodic visits from district supervisors and such, my efforts were not rewarded with a heartfelt pat on the back, but with a needling "How many *Fantasias* did you pre-sell to that guy?"

The one Blockbuster promotion I dove into with relative enthusiasm was the "rent three videos, get a free 2-liter of Pepsi" deal, because given the customers' choices of evening viewing, I thought it best they be tanked up on *something*.

Do I sound embittered and hateful? In some respects, I am. But all nametag jobs are dead-end jobs; I can say in my defense that I was in college at the time, finely honing a skill that no one can take from me. But for those seeking out video stores as a means of gainful employment, let's face it: Going home with a quarterly employee review that remarks on your ability to suggestive-sell packages of Twizzlers just isn't what I'd call career advancement.

Those were carefree days, though, and I'll never forget the reshelving races, the manager who put in dirty movies after the store closed and the retarded guy who always came in and rented the women-in-prison flicks.

But for the most part, that's about it.

Besides, the company failed to protect me against repeated death threats from a samurai-like customer who carried a gun in his car, the indecisive higher-ups were constantly taking away and then reinstating our 10-percent candy discount and I was never sent my commemorative one-year's-service watch which I am rightfully owed.

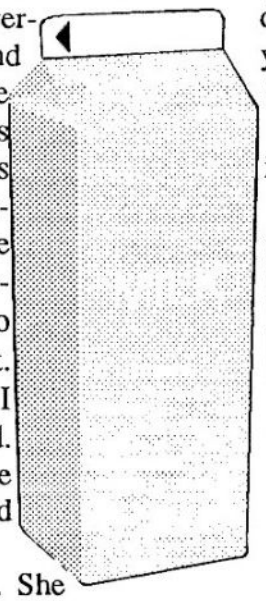
Wow, what a screw-over. **H**

Confessions of a Milk-Lovin' Fiend

By Ken Davis

For three and a half years, I kept a deep dark secret from my wife. I hid my ruse behind a web of deception and trickery. Oh, yes, I was clever, my friend.

Then it happened. I became reckless in my attempts to hide my despicable act. Maybe I wanted to get caught. Late one night, after I thought she had gone to bed, I got busted. I was caught red-handed – holding the smoking gun, if you will.



I was watching television when I was overcome with a powerful thirst. It wasn't the kind of thirst that would be quenched easily. Some sissy Snapple (alliteration intentional) or glass of juice simply would not suffice. No, this thirst screamed for a swig of cold milk. I quietly went into the kitchen and opened the fridge door. I took out the gallon jug and reverently took off the top. I hoisted the jug up to my mouth and planted my lips firmly upon it. The milk was cold and very refreshing. I couldn't remember milk ever tasting as good. But then I noticed my wife watching from the hallway. Suddenly, the milk tasted rancid and sour.

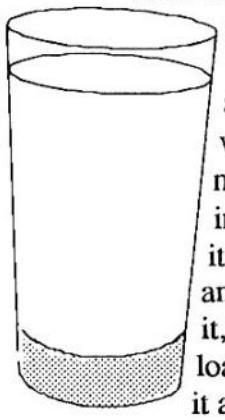
My wife's eyes were like red-hot coals. She quickly confirmed my notion that drinking milk directly from the container would probably be frowned upon in our household. The fact that I had been sick with the flu that week probably helped fuel the fire in her eyes and in her voice.

I felt bad for having done something that I knew all along was wrong. I was relieved that the cat was out of the bag and that I didn't have to continue living a lie. I felt like I had a renewed trust with my wife, that I could tell her anything. But I didn't. There have been other things I have kept from my wife, and I've never had the courage to tell her. I'm not proud of it, but its true. Oh, I guess we all tell little white lies from time to time, but that doesn't make it right. I want to use this forum to come clean, to spill my guts, purge my soul. Debbie, if you're reading this, I ask your forgiveness.

Last semester when I got all As, you said that I was very smart, all of my hard work had paid off and that you were very proud of me. I bribed my professors with money and booze.

You know your diamond ring that I got you for your birthday? Yeah, the one you love so much. Remember how I told you not to worry about how much it cost, that I would take care of it? The ring is stolen.

The blind little dog two houses down that made that annoying *"Yap! Yap! Yap!"* sound didn't die of old age like her owner Rita said. I'm afraid I had a little something to do with it.



When I told you about my new free Internet account through school, you were excited that we could dump the old account along with the monthly $25 charge. Well, the account is indeed free, but the school didn't exactly *give* it to me. I tapped into their computer network and assigned myself an account. While I was at it, I took the liberty of eliminating my student loan information and gave myself a line of credit at the student snack bar. Was that wrong?

Remember that time we were driving home from Blockbuster Video and that guy was in the middle of the street and wouldn't move? We honked our horn and yelled until he finally moved, but he gave us the finger. Remember how mad it made us that he had the nerve to just stand in the middle of the street like that and block traffic? Remember how upset you were that he flipped us off? I went back later and killed him.

Thanks for letting me get this stuff off my chest. I feel much better now. **H**

Reach Out and Touch Yourself

Is Phone Sex Sweet Relief or a Telephone Terror?

By Ryun Patterson

Everyone's seen the ads. Alluring young women in various states of undress beckon you with their provocative poses, the ads proclaiming how they "need it NOW!" or some other sexy innuendo. The phone numbers usually contain some cute wordplay, like "Call me at 555-HOTT today!"

Are these lines worth $4.99 a minute? Are the women in the ads really in it for the sheer Bacchanalian joy of arousing men with their silky-smooth voices, or are they just faking it? **HITCH** has gone undercover, risking life, limb and outrageously high phone bills to bring you the inside info on Ma Bell's dirty little secret.

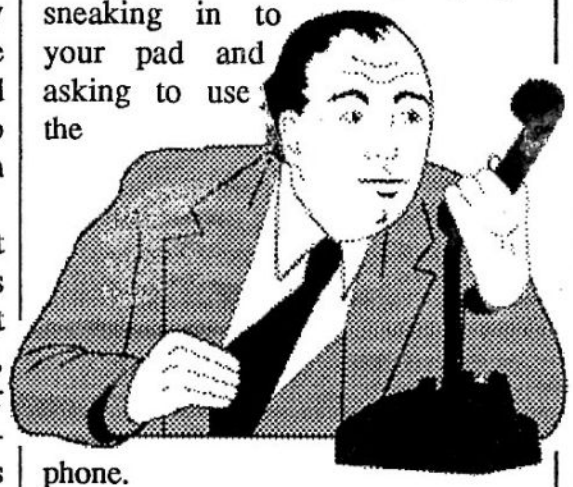
The first step in finding out what phone sex lines are best for you is finding a number to call. You won't find these digits just anywhere, though; oh, heavens no. The mother lode of these stairways to heaven lies in magazines such as *Hustler* and *Swank*. But if you can't get up the nerve to purchase these monthly tributes to the power of Satan, then just pick up the latest issue of *Rolling Stone* and look in the classified section.

Now, if you want to call for a "rockin' GOOD time!" as one ad put it, be sure to have a touch-tone phone. If you don't, you will first be connected to an innocent operator who will have nothing to do with your buttocks and a jar of orange marmalade.

There are three main inroads on the landscape of phone sex, these being 900 and 800 calls, 011 calls and various other numbers that seem to be located in America but are not. Trust me.

800 Numbers

These means of achieving "the best phone satisfaction" (as one ad put it) are usually the most expensive. The "800" calls, while appearing to be free, are not; they ask your credit card number, whereas 900 numbers charge your phone line, so be weary of people sneaking in to your pad and asking to use the phone.



These numbers start with a taped introduction, telling you that "we're sure to give you a *hot* time" and "We guarantee you *maximum* satisfaction!" Then the voice gives you more numbers to choose from, thus adding more time for billing purposes.

Then an automated menu comes up. On these expensive calls, you are given the option of going "live, one-on-one" with a variety of girls, including nympho co-eds, hot housewives and middle-aged mistresses. For a little less money, you can choose the "hot group action," in which five to 10 older, socialized men try to coerce the one "hot woman" into joining them in various sundry verbal activities.

The cheapest option of all, though, is the "voice personals," in which any caller can leave a message for other callers, respond directly to other messages, or, for an extra charge, be connected directly to others' houses for phone frivolity! These messages are definitely for the most desperate of the desperate, and they contain messages like, "Hi, this is Bill from Nebraska. My sheep are asleep and I'm looking for some hot phone action with a girl willing to dominate me." Dominate *this*, Bill.

While the most recognizable, these numbers are just in it to gyp you from your last measly dime. But you knew that.

011 Numbers

While these numbers start with what seems to be the prefix for "operator," they really are direct connections to prerecorded lust.

The "011" prefix stands for "international," so even though many of the ads proclaim "FREE! FREE! FREE!," the phone company will bill you an arm and a leg (or other appendages) for calls to the Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal or other wild, *happening countries* spanning the globe.

The services offered, however, have *nothing* to do with nationality, and *everything* to do with hot phone action. They consist almost solely of prerecorded women detailing their fantasies concerning bondage, various apparel and other activities I

wouldn't discuss with anyone. Believe me, these services are *very* naughty, and I have the phone bill to reflect this fact!

While appearing to be free, these numbers are just in the business to steal the shirt off your hairy back.

818, 608, etc. Numbers

These gateways to carnal linguistics are the most devious of all. They are advertised as "FREE HOT PHONE ACTION," but really are neither free nor hot, and the range of motion on these calls can hardly be classified as "action."

Long-distance rates apply, however, and these numbers, although they do not contain the dreaded "011" prefix, are also international calls. Most of them are located in the Dominican Republic, which is famous for its baseball players, so obviously, there are many baseball widows not getting a cut of their husbands' healthy paychecks.

Most of these numbers have no paid staff to provide the "phone fun" (as they call it), so the chance of talking to an actual woman on these lines is slim to none. There are two options: one, a "group party room," and the other, voice personals similar to those described above.

The "group party room" is an adventure like no other. In this aural playground, a group of really *really* ***really*** desperate (I can't emphasize this enough) men who, since there are no women on the line, just talk about what they would do *if* they happened to find a woman. This is the pit of degradation. Just think of it: a bunch of horribly needy proto-men talking on a phone line in the Dominican Republic about how if they could ever get a woman, boy, how happy she would be!

Despite the fact that it is perhaps the cruelest place to send a man apart from shopping for maternity clothes, the operators of this line still try to separate you from all your worldly possessions.

The Operators

In order to gain greater insight into the workings of this despicable extension of Hell, **HITCH** got down and dirty with some operators to figure out what "HOT PHONE ACTION!" really entails.

The first woman I talked to was "Donna" (I am suspicious about this name). She was a lonely housewife, and I mean *really* lonely. On her little soundbite, she spoke of how her husband doesn't satisfy her; thus, she does phone sex for fun. But when I got on the line with "Donna," she didn't talk about sex at all. This is because they aren't supposed to talk about sex for five to 10 minutes in order to achieve maximum billing minutes (at least that's what "Donna" said). When I asked her what her husband did, "Donna" couldn't really say, then she covered the phone, asked somebody else, came back and told me that he was a plumber. Boy, was she forgetful!

Anyway, "Donna" explained to me that her husband liked her to tell him what she said to all of her clients, and when I asked her why he liked that, she said she didn't know. She sure didn't have much of a life, if that was the case. When asked if she ever ridiculed her more adventurous callers with comments such as, "You want me to do *what*?" or, "*Where* do I put the Jell-O brand gelatin mix?"

Needless to say, "Donna" was not amused, and I was disconnected, presumably due to a problem with the transatlantic telephone cable.

Another facilitator of the telephone pleasure industry, "Julie," was located in the Dominican Republic. "Julie" had a brother in the Toronto Blue Jays baseball club, and she thought he had a good chance of making the Arizona Fall League. We talked about baseball (with only one reference by her to the length of my "bat") for a while, and she told me that the phone sex industry was a huge employer in the Dominican Republic, being as the country's laws concerning that sort of thing are less harsh than in the good ol' USA.

She then asked me if I was ready to talk about sex, to which I replied, "*What*? This isn't Philip Michael Thomas' Psychic Line?"

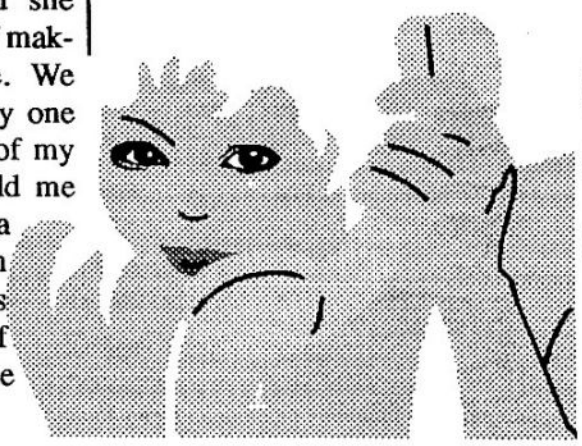
Julie was coy, and said that I didn't really want a psychic; what I wanted was *her*. I, however, disagreed, stating the fact that I had a girlfriend as a rebuttal to her statement.

Check-up calls have shown **HITCH** that "Donna" is still a lonely housewife and that "Julie" is still in Santa Domingo. Her brother is now in the Arizona Fall League, and has a good chance of making the club, but she also lies to hundreds of men everyday for a living, so why the hell should we trust her?

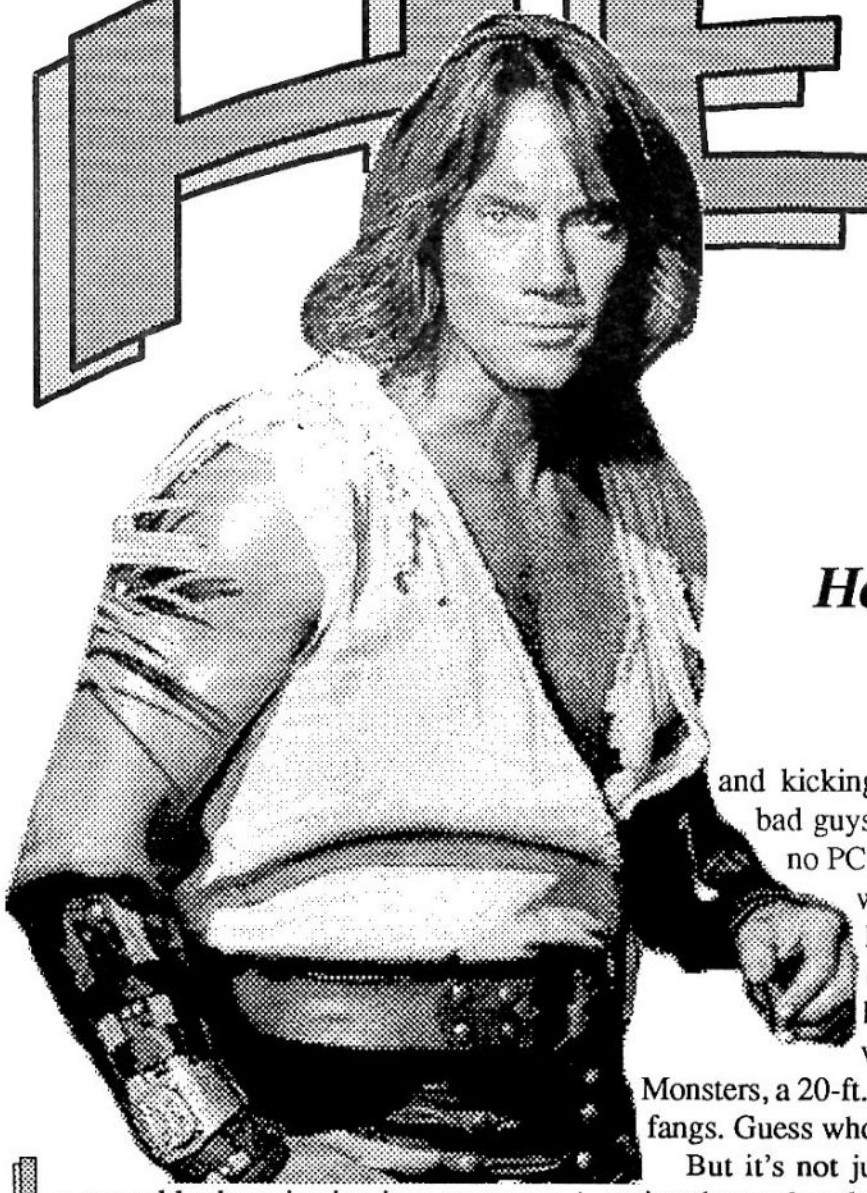
This **HITCH** writer has also seen no end of girlfriend trouble after failing to make clear what kind of calls was making and for what purpose. When my girlfriend found a phone bill lying out, this **HITCH** contributor was in very hot water, and with that on top of my already astronomical phone bills, I will never visit the land of phone-sex again.

So, just to wrap up, there are much better, cheaper ways of getting people to talk to you in a sexy voice. For example, call them up and tell them they've won a million dollars. Get *Eight is Enough* pulled from the local station's lineup. Tell everyone that you were the guy who thought up that whole "Urkel" thing. Or go online... which will be the next installment.

But phone sex? Man, it's a stone-cold drag. **H**



COOL HERC



For B-Level Entertainment, TV's *Hercules* Is the Show to Beat

By Malena Lott

In a world where justice is a synonym for money, I have realized I can depend on one man and one man alone to defend our globe.

And just when I have watched too many news shows where murderers, rapists and thieves get away with their crimes against humanity, and I feel society is sucking my last breath, Sunday arrives and 6 p.m. CST lulls me into a peaceful state of mind, as the television transforms into a courtroom of yesteryear where my hero once walked the earth righting wrongs and fighting evil.

He is none other than Hercules, the ultimate he-man of the '90s. Doing good and kicking the crap out of the bad guys is his forte. And he's no PC schmuck, either. He'll whoop up on an evil lassie if the dame deserves it. Recently, he had to get nasty with the Queen of Monsters, a 20-ft. reptilian creature with fangs. Guess who won?

But it's not just the heart-pounding action that makes the syndicated *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* tops on my must-see list; it's the wacky dialogue, the nutty special effects and the perplexing issues that make me wonder about my own psyche. For instance, in the episode mentioned above with the freaky snake lady, she was married to a human giant. Throughout the episode people made comments like, "Hmmm....I would've never placed them together." Once the couple reunited, the snake chick and her many octopus arms are all over her husband as they kiss. Hercules (Kevin Sorbo) makes a grotesque expression as if thinking, *"How do they do it?"*

Different episode, same mind-baffling scenario. It's about a Centaur (half-horse, half-man) living in a village where he is treated like dirt *manely* because he is different from everyone else, though he can do twice the work of a mortal man. He's married to a human woman and they have a child. I had been pondering on: a) how they could have sex, and b) what the offspring would look like. Painful labor and cruel name-calling like "Hey, Tori Spelling!" all come to mind. The woman and child are supposedly killed when mean villagers set the hut on fire. Later, at least one of my questions was answered. The son, who lived by the way, is a Centaur! I could just imagine the birth: *Alright, one hoof out, just three more to go!*

Every episode is entertaining, and you can be assured of a few things each week:

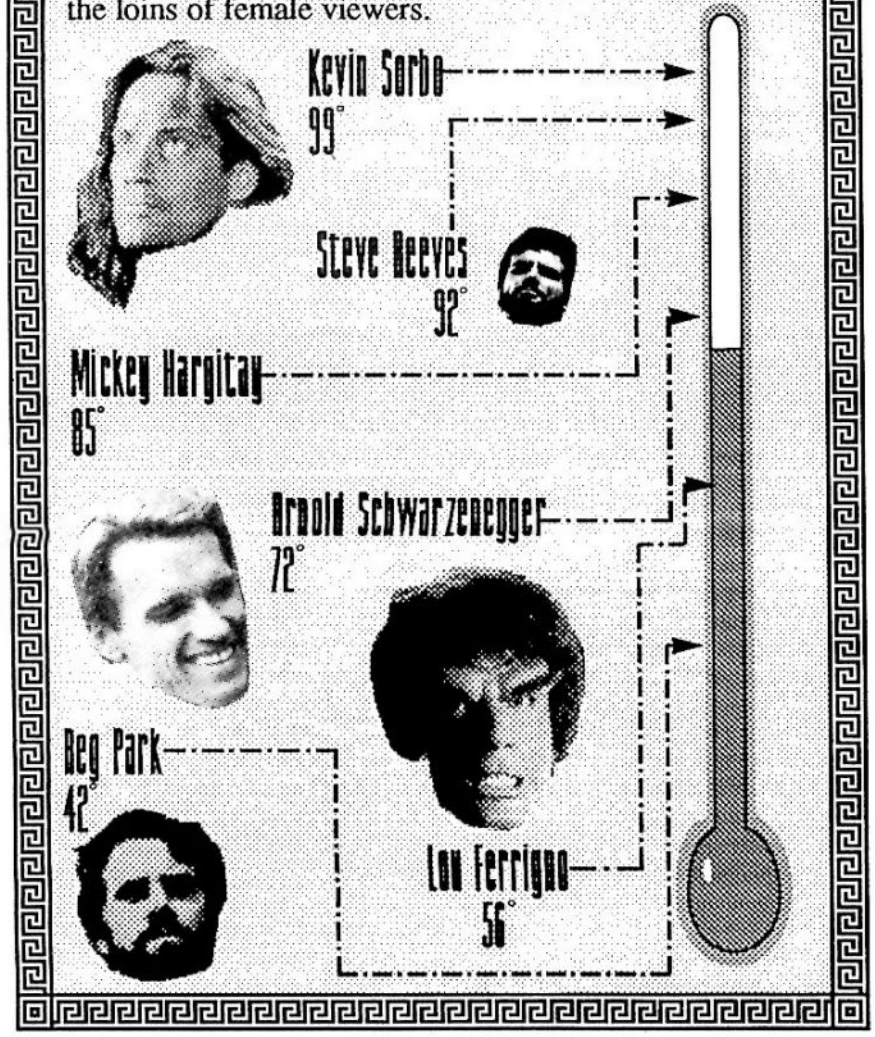
1. First and foremost, you will see Kevin Sorbo's chest. (And trust me, that's a good thing.)

2. You will see Hercules punch, jump, kick and throw people very, very far. Inevitably, someone will say, "You're *the* Hercules?" to which he will reply coyly,

Herc at work:
(above left) The octo-armed snake woman.
(above right) Our long-haired hero comes face-to-pelvis with a pony-tailed giant.

Therm-O-Herc

While Kevin Sorbo is certainly not the first guy to fill Hercules' strap-up boots, he's arguably been pegged the sexiest. See how Mr. Sorbo compares with some of Hollywood's other Hercs when it comes to heating up the loins of female viewers.



"Yes, have you heard of me?" Charming, ain't it?

3. Some goof-troop will run through the jungle, desert or wherever and (surprise!) always find Hercules to take him back to save some village or person or what have you. Of course, he does.

4. There will be a pretty girl with fairly big boobs, and Hercules won't bed her down like the lustful creature wants! Maybe he forgot his sheep-skin prophylactics or he's still mourning over the death of his wife – who, by the way, caused me my only disappointment in this stellar series. In the premiere episodes of the two-year-old series, Herc's wife was played by Tawny Kitaen. The mere mention of her name conjures up painful memories of seeing her slither on cars in Whitesnake videos. Furthermore, O.J. Simpson has slept with her, which is proof enough that she isn't good enough for the son of Zeus.

Of course, Hercules did sleep with Xena, and his powerful semen caused her to get her own show – *Xena: Warrior Princess* (both shows produced by *Evil Dead* impresario Sam Raimi) – which tells you why it is so important he doesn't spread the seed too often.

As it just so happens, I am writing this on a Sunday, and with all the political poo-pooing going on in the world this week, I am ready to shout in orgasmic exasperation, "Hercules, take me away!" **H**

THE SHANE SHAW REDEMPTION

A Day in the Life of a Grade-School Adventurer

By Brad Lott

His name is Shane Shaw. At a strapping age 10, he stands a stout 4'3", 160 lbs. A hefty young buck, but a lad with balls of steel. His passion is stunt riding on his Huffy bicycle.

It is not by design, however, that this youngster stumbled upon his thrill-seeking pastime of tricks and spills, but rather sheer dumb luck, too many hours of chips and Nintendo and the apparent lack of a decent education. What follows is a day of terrors following this crafty, pre-pubescent stuntboy as he rides balls-out on his two-wheeled cycle of doom.

Shane: It's a nice day. Perfect for flips.

HITCH: You can do flips?

Shane: Well, sometimes.

He chuckles, his round, beaver-like face jiggling. Shane is outfitted in corduroy pants, a plain white tanktop and some fly Vans. His rolls of flab equip him with the padding he so needs for his dangerous sport. I notice just how much alike he and his 14-year-old sister look in a tanktop. He carries his trademark three-liter of Coca-Cola, which is almost empty, and it's only noon.

HITCH: Shane, let's start by going over some highlights from your past, some stories of triumph in the face of impending danger.

Shane: Huh?

HITCH: Tell me about some tricks you've pulled.

Shane: I can pop good wheelies!

HITCH: And?

Shane: I like to use cats as props in my stunts. I've done a lot of ramping. I almost jumped my parents' fence once. I can jump the shrubs over there, too.

Been a hard day's night: Shane at rest

HITCH: Let's see it.

Shane takes off without hesitation, with the vigor of a true daredevil. He makes the jump with ease, using the curb as his point of takeoff. He soon returns, breathless.

HITCH: So how many bike wrecks have you been in?

Shane: Oh, say, more than a hundred.

HITCH: What happened during your last big wreck?

Shane: Oh, that was when I whammed my jaw into a metal fence at the church and the fence fell off.

HITCH: Did the crash damage your bike?

Shane: It was my mom's bike. The rim got bent and the pedal fell off.

HITCH: Tell me of another one.

Shane: When I ramped off my big blue ramp, I landed on my head and my toe got broke. I peeled some skin off my knee and I got racked. I also lost a shoe and my mom gave me licks.

HITCH: Why is it you try and ramp things?

Shane: I want to be a stuntman when I grow up.

HITCH: Does your mother get mad when you wreck your bike?

Shane: No, she doctors up my head, legs and stuff. Well, one time I wrecked and said "Shit!" and she heard me, but I learned it from her.

HITCH: What tricks can we see you accomplish in the near future?

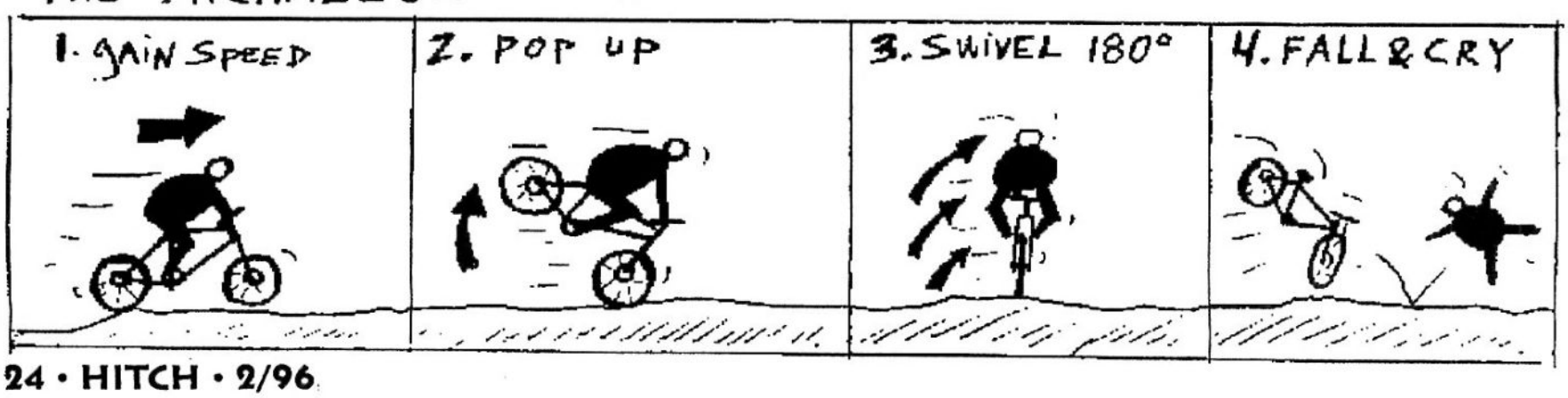
Shane: Well, me and my friend Justin put hairspray on my ramp and lit it, but the flames went out before I got to it. We're gonna try gasoline Saturday.

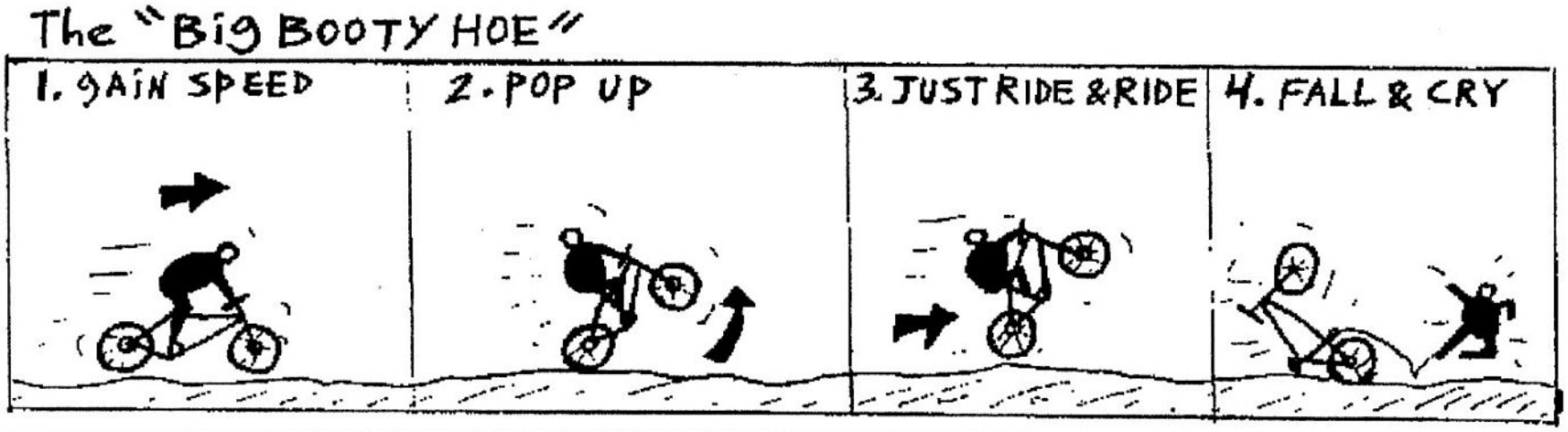
HITCH: That's a great trick, Shane. Where did you get the idea?

Shane: I saw it at the fair.

HITCH: Where do you get the courage to perform such dangerous stunts?

Shane: Well, my mom says I'm always





rowdy 'cuz I drink so much sodas. She says I'm always climbin' the rafters.

HITCH: Do you ever solve crimes while riding your bicycle?

Shane: Sort of.

HITCH: Let's see some more tricks, Shane.

After some discussion over what exactly I wanted to witness, Shane demonstrated some of his tricks which he swore he "made up" himself. He pulled what he calls his "Michael Jackson," his "Big Booty" and his "Power Ranger." (See accompanying illustrations.)

I also saw him knock down a pile of bricks and wheelie through the neighbor's garden. He "bunny-hopped" over a potted plant, wrecked into a bush and cried.

Even tough stuntguys lose it now and then, as Shane regains his composure and limps toward me.

HITCH: Are you alright?

Shane: Yeah, that wasn't bad. I didn't break nothin'. One time I jumped a 50-foot tree and landed on my butt.

HITCH: Wow, 50 feet, huh?

Shane: Yeah, I think about this tall. (He measures out somewhere around four feet with his pudgy arms.) I can also jump cars! Wanna see?

HITCH: Sure. Go for it.

Shane: Alright, hang on.

He sets his blue ramp up next to his mom's green El Camino, but his mother catches him and puts a stop to his daring attempt.

"Blubbers!" she yells, "get the hell off'a there!" Shane retreats.

HITCH: Why does your mom call you Blubbers?

Shane: Shut up, you! (Obviously tortured by years of emotional anguish.) Oh, well, let's go to the church and jump the Big Toy.

After a short walk, we reach a large playground which houses a huge metal swingset, two colossal slides and a tire swing. Shane races through the parking lot and jumps a parking block so he can slide his bike along a fence rail. He falls, bounces and, once again, cries.

This time, it takes some coaxing to get him to resume his trickin'.

HITCH: Are you injured?

Shane: Nah, I'm just bleeding a little. I've done that before. Man, my mom's gonna get mad.

Undaunted by his spill, Shane remounts his bike and speeds toward the slides.

Shane: I'm gonna flip off'a *that*!

HITCH: Alright. Be careful.

My confidence in him, though, is a tad bit shaken. Shane rides toward the slide, giving himself plenty of headstart for speed. He darts up the slide, clears the top and sails high in the air. He attempts a flip, but starts it far too late, a mere two to three feet from the ground, which is speeding toward him. Upon impact, many sick noises are audible. He twists, grinds, bounces and spins along the dirt and rock, a cloud of dust sparing me from the grisly carnage. And then, he cries.

I run over to him, fearing a lawsuit.

HITCH: Are you alright, Shane?

Shane: (between cries and sniffles) I'm alright....I don't want to do any more tricks today.

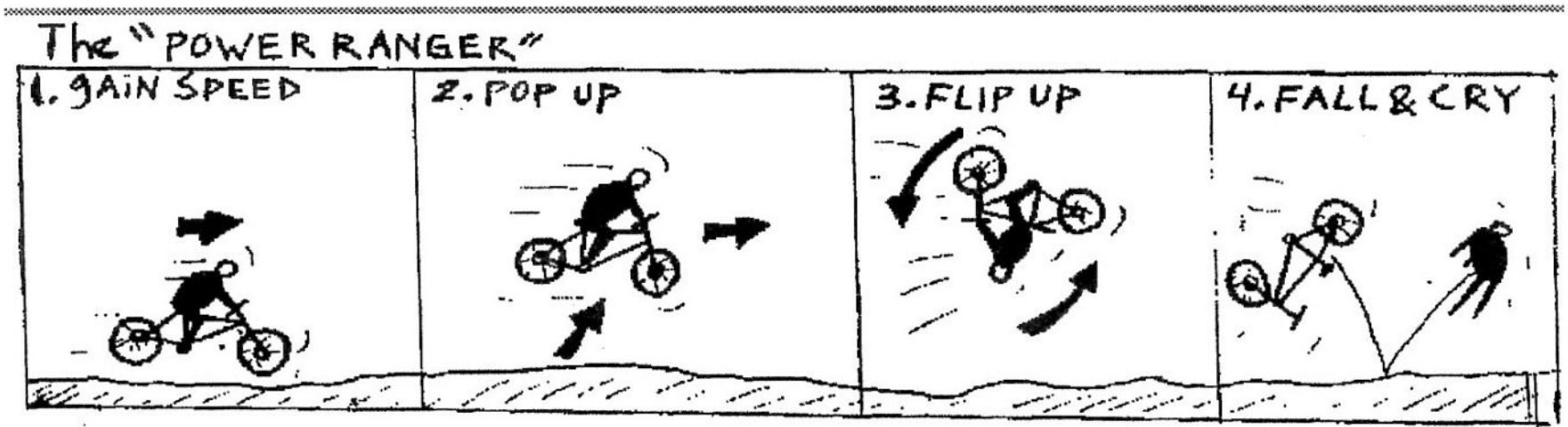
As we head for home, he stops crying. I realize he is finished for today, but will ride proud again tomorrow. He has the heart of a lion. I wonder if he will ever attempt the slide stunt again, or how next Saturday's fire trick will go.

HITCH: What will you call the famous slide jump trick, Shane?

Shane: (pausing courageously) I don't know.

"I don't know," I think to myself. Man, what a crafty trickster.

H



JOHNNIE COCHRAN

WILL *YOU* REPRESENT *ME*?

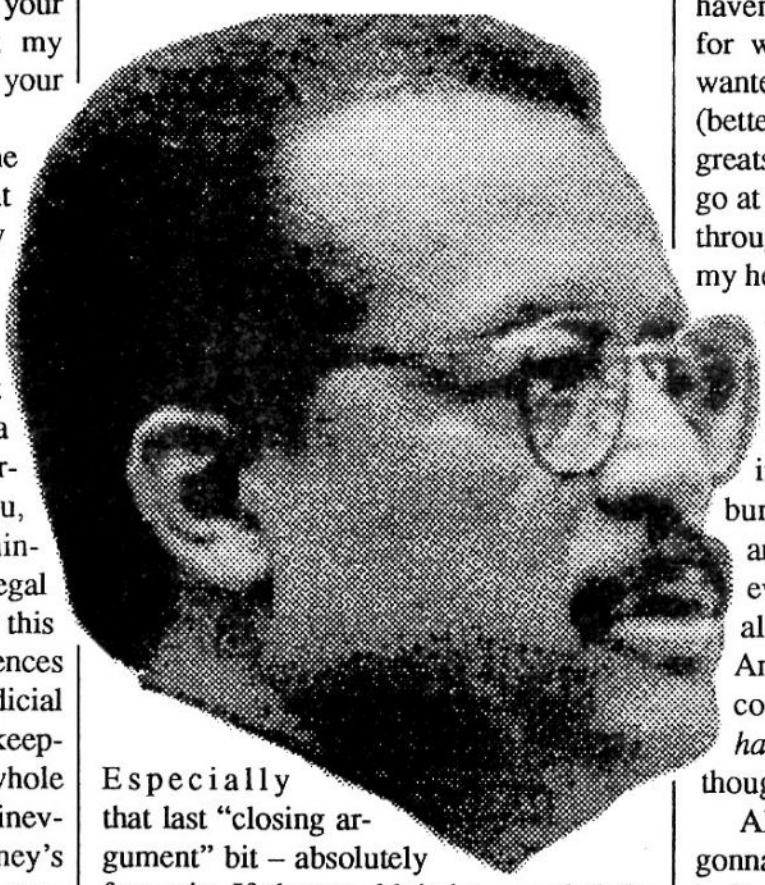
An Open Letter to America's Snazziest Superlawyer

By Joe Rogers

Yeah, yeah, I'll bet you're getting requests of this nature every 10 minutes or so nowadays, with your constantly ringing phone (music to your ears, eh?) bringing you yet another poor, soon-to-be-convicted soul petitioning – hell, *begging* – you for your lawyering skills. It almost disheartens me, in fact, to be one of so many who needs not only a good lawyer, but needs *you* in particular, who is requesting your services. But please bear with me; my solicitation may prove to be right up your alley.

Let me begin by explaining the exact reasons why I've decided that my counsel should be furnished by none other than yourself. Of course, I, along with the rest of the global multitudes, caught bits and pieces of your most recent routine on television. Is it okay if I refer to what you do as a "routine?" I mean, sure, there are certain aspects of it that aren't up to you, the lead actor, but most of these little hindrances pop up in the guise of legal semantics. You know what I mean by this – certain words and phrases and sequences and rules designed by the great judicial gods of times past for the purpose of keeping a certain formal structure to the whole thing must be adhered to and will, inevitably, influence the course of an attorney's performance to some degree – but I consider these elements to be nothing more than their Broadway theatrical counterparts: the audience, the script, the props, the venue and all the other things the thespian's performance is contingent upon. The individualization of a rendition, however, is due to the amount of liberty (in a literal sense here) the player can achieve within these concrete parameters. I hope this terminology doesn't bother you too much, my calling your job little more than a routine and all, but I just want to be frank with you from the word go (because, after all, aren't clients supposed to be frank with their representatives?) and let you know that I'm hip to the judicial jive, if you know what I mean.

Anyhow, I caught some of your act, and let me tell you, I was most impressed.



Especially that last "closing argument" bit – absolutely fantastic. If that couldn't have sealed the collective mind of any jury anywhere, well, it'd be a group the likes of which I've never seen. And that rhyming thing you got going there – that rhyming thing got me a-bouncin'. "If it does not fit / You must acquit" keeps ringing through my head like a moral imperative (and that *was* the idea, ultimately, huh?). It chants to me like song lyrics that pester me from time to time, never leaving me alone. And let me be the first to tell you that your lyric has any of the current hits licked a thousand times over. It's right up there with the best of the best (and I'm not just talking about Seattle grunge here).

Salutations and compliments aside for the moment, let me cut straight to the chase (and by that I mean my case). First of all, let me come right out and tell you that I haven't actually yet committed the crime for whose sentence you'll defend me. I wanted to go about it better than most do (better than even O.J., one of the true greats, did) and have everything all set to go at my cue. That way I won't have to go through the nonsense of holding a gun to my head in order to stall for the time to figure out what to do next. I figure that'll save you from the trouble of having yet another thing to cover up (because, of course, there will be the inevitable loose strings that will need burying). I'll try and minimize the amount of shoveling you'll need to do, even though (I assume) that's nothing all that new to you, eh, Johnnie? Anyhow, yes, I'm clamoring for your committal to my case before I actually *have* a case. Kinda like that, do you? I thought you would.

Alright, you say, let me hear what I'm gonna have to get the jury to acquit you for before I set any plans in stone. Fair enough, I say. The idea's simple enough, and it's one that you're already all read up on: I want to kill my wife.

Ouch! you say, are you tryin' to poke fun at me or somethin'? *Au contraire, mon frère*, I say. I'm not the fun-poking kind. Hmmm, you say. I get it. But tell me this: *Why* do you want to kill the woman?

Johnnie, Johnnie, Johnnie...as if that ever mattered before! Since when does one

need a reason to kill his wife? She just bugs the hell out of me, okay? She drives me batty! She drives me nuts! Always wanting things, always bossing me around, always wanting to go places, to some stupid movie or to some stupid function, dragging me from place to place when all I'm really interested in doing is watching the Dallas Cowboys football game! Can you imagine? Of course you can, right? I mean, those women...enough to drive a man to drink, or worse, wouldn't you say?

Hmmm, you say, I do see where you're coming from. But what about that television thing? I kinda got used to that for a while there, with all that fame! Same stuff in a boring old closed courtroom, well, it just doesn't have that appeal to me anymore. How can you help me there?

Good question, I reply. First of all, we'll try and strum up public interest in the case and see whether or not we can get the thing broadcast live (as live is the only way to go). I plan on committing the crime in New York City (we're taking a vacation there to see some musicals this Christmas), and I have a hunch that The Big Apple is just dying for some international media attention.

They've been without much news (and, hence, without much attention) up there for a while, what with *your* own media blitz, along with the Yugoslavia tribulations and the Oklahoma City bombing stealing that valuable limelight from directly underneath Manhattan's nose. I don't doubt those jaded urbanites out in anti-Newtville would jump at the chance for some international attention once again.

Alright, okay, you say. But what about the hot issue? The hot issue? I ask. Yeah, you say, the hot issue, *the* hot issue, the racial issue. You know that's my number-one specialty; has your case got anything of *that* nature in it?

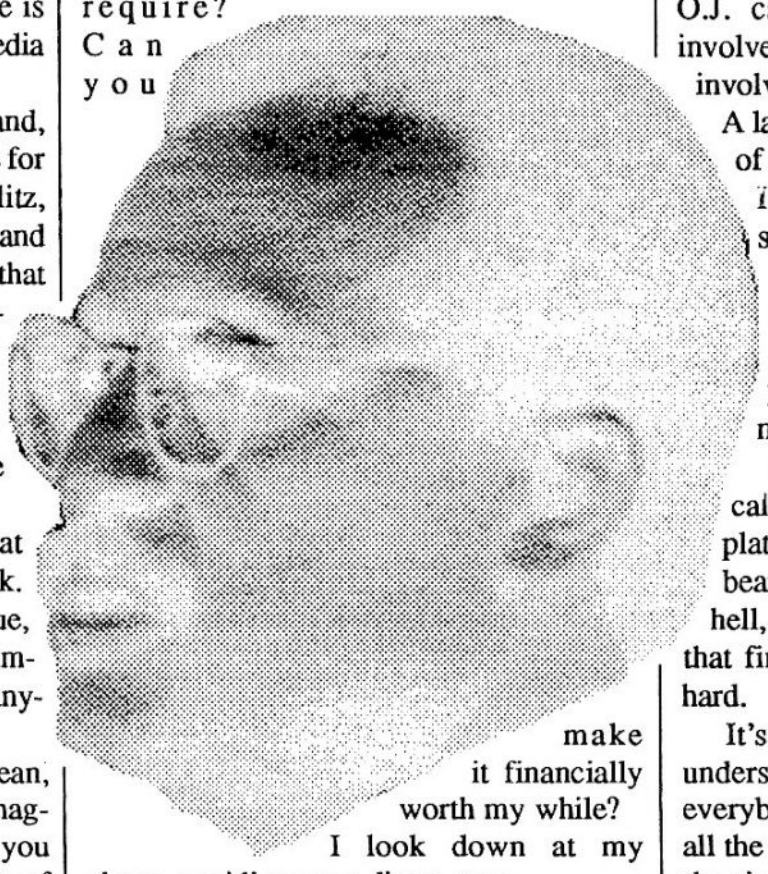
Well, at first glance, it doesn't. I mean, hey, *I am a white* man, and yes, my nagging wife is white, too. I don't think you could get a lot of judicial mileage out of those facts, unless...unless you could manage to reverse the racial issue somehow! Now, Johnnie, I'm freewheelin' here, so flow with me a second...Yeah! We could have – we could *invent* a racist cop who finds the accusatory evidence! Something like...hey, I've got it! How about a Middle-Eastern Muslim fellow? A reactionary! Someone with a real, documented (through witnesses, of course), paranoiac, jihadesque mentality, some loon who thinks the final apocalyptic times are "just around the corner," a real fruitcake who has a point-of-view which demands the ethnic cleansing of the world to take place before that final eschatological event can come to fruition.

How 'bout something along those lines? I mean, *there's* a hot issue for you if ever there was one!

I can see that smile on your face, Johnnie...is my case gradually beginning to sound sweeter to your ears?

Anyhow, I caught some of your act, and let me tell you, I was most impressed. And that rhyming thing you got going there – "If it does not fit / You must acquit" – that rhyming thing got me a-bouncin'.

Well, yeah, you say, it is. Everything sounds good, everything checks out. There's just one final clarification I need. Oh? I ask. And what might that be? You smile a sheepish-yet-pragmatic grin. Money, you say. Have you got the cash I require? Can you make it financially worth my while?



I look down at my shoes, avoiding your direct stare.

Well, Johnnie, my man, I ain't no O.J.. I mean, my pockets ain't warehouses of dollars. Hmmm, you say, frowning. I don't know...

You don't know? C'mon, Johnnie, even though *I* can't pay your exorbitant fees, don't think there's no capital reward in it for you. I mean, hey, we don't have to act like things are any different than they really are, do we? We can come right out and tell the "truth" for once: In the end, after all the cards have been drawn, it's the money alone that counts. Fine. I know how the world works, and when I tell you that yes, it *will* be worth your while, I'm not only talking about laurels and great press coverage and excellent advertising. Sure, you'll be swimming in laurels and press and advertisements through the course of this thing, just like you were throughout the O.J. case, but there'll be an element involved here that wasn't there. My case involves a lawsuit.

A lawsuit? you perk up. Just what kind of lawsuit are we talkin' 'bout here?

I smile. Any old high-dollar kind, I say. Any old kind you can dream up.

You knit your brows and I can sense your wheels turning, your gears shifting. Who could we sue? you think. Someone with a load of money, someone we could nail...

So I leave you, Superlawyer (may I call you that?), with that final contemplation, the determination of who will bear the brunt of our judicial blow. But hell, Johnnie, you know as well as I do that finding someone to sue isn't all that hard.

It's done all the time, from what I understand. I mean, everybody's suing everybody for one thing or another; I see it all the time on television, I read about it all the time in the paper. And a good opportunist lawyer like yourself? Finding a sue-ee? Should be a piece of cake. Just weigh the public opinion scales and go at it.

Anyhow, Johnnie Cochran, I await your answer. Whaddaya think? Sound like something you'd be interested in? Something that'd float your boat? Something that you could really sink your teeth into?

I thought so.

H

Now Ear THIS

Alternative rock's hotshots band together for a bowl of sugar-coated nostalgia on ***Saturday Morning: Cartoons' Greatest Hits*** (MCA), a tribute album of sorts to the most underappreciated of musical classics: cartoon theme songs. Expectations on such an exciting concept can be high, and damned if the disc doesn't match, if not outright surpass, them.

Just how much fun the album itself intends to have is evident from the get-go, as Liz Phair and Material Issue take a spirited rip into "The Tra-La-La Song" from *The Banana Splits*. Matthew Sweet turns in his take on "Scooby-Doo, Where Are You?" with an expected melodic glee, as Rev. Horton Heat works wonders with the squelch-ridden theme to *Jonny Quest*.

Out of a generous 19 tracks, only three fail. Both the Butthole Surfers' "Underdog" and Helmet's "Gigantor" are so distorted from their originals that the fun is twisted out of them. (That's not to say the others turn in note-for-note remakes, but they have a firm grasp on the concept that jollity is the name of the game here.) Similarly, Sponge's "Speed Racer" is delivered with such a passive feeling that it's not the anthem you know it can be (and for proof, check out the B-side to Sweet's current "We're the Same" single from Zoo). Luckily, vets Violent Femmes show them all how things are done with the playful "Eep Opp Ork Ah-Ah" from *The Jetsons*.

Making *Saturday* Violent

Dig takes the *Fat Albert* theme to new heights (love that bassline) as Tripping Daisy serves up a double-helping of songs from *Sigmund and the Seamonsters*. Other highlights include the Ramones' "Spider-Man," Frente!'s "Open Up Your Heart and Let the Sun Shine In" from *The Flintstones* and Sublime's ska-flavored "Hong Kong Phooey."

Producer Ralph Sall has succeeded in creating "the ultimate party album." It's fun, frantic and highly repeatable. Get out your Cap'n Crunch and prepare yourself for a sugar high.

A wiry little Brit by the name of Edwyn Collins makes a thoroughly winning debut with ***Gorgeous George*** (Bar/None), a winning pastiche of smooth, smoky-dark pop that at times recalls the glory days of David Bowie.

Voice equal parts velvet and bourbon, Collins slips on a comfortable pair of lounge lizard shoes for "A Girl Like You," the funky hit single that's got everything (including a killer bassline and seductive drum licks) but the tacky blue strobe lights. Never going for the obvious, Collins' songwriting is smart and strong, best exemplified in the venture toward the seemingly serious, "Low Expectations" and the lo-fi pleasures of "Make Me Feel Again." Yet he never fears to veer toward the caustic, as he does in "North of Heaven" with the album's most memorable lyric: *"Some mother's talking 'bout Guns 'N' Roses / As if I give a fuck / At best I think they suck."*

Collins clearly doesn't. Yet, for three-and-a-half minutes on the album's hidden track, he warns, "This music won't take you higher, unless you're a moron." I suppose I can learn to live with that label.

Maybe my recommendation of The Smithereens' greatest hits disc, *Blown to Smithereens*, in **HITCH** 8 was an understatement; over time, this has revealed itself to be an album with not one bad song.

A perfect companion piece is the newly released ***Attack of the Smithereens*** (Capitol), a collection of B-sides, covers, alternate versions and other rarities. Whether you're a die-hard fan or new to the band's work, the 26-track (!) assortment is a treat through and through.

Most enjoyable are the cuts of the band's earliest songs, like "Time and Time Again" and "Girls about Town," both of which prove their talent was never in short supply. Two demos of "Blood and Roses" provide a glimpse into a song's evolution, while you'll wonder how such previously unreleased songs as "Poor Little Pitiful One" never found their way onto a Smithereens record.

Along the way, the Smithereens cover the giants (Elvis, Bowie, the Beatles, the Beach Boys and the Who) and join forces for live performances with the Kinks and the Beau Brummels. Sinatra's "Something Stupid" gets a respectful make-over, while the take on "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer" is one you won't be embarrassed to listen to in July. An *MTV Unplugged* rendition of "Behind the Wall of Sleep," however, fails to match expectations, largely because guest Graham Parker lends it his voice, one that betrays the charms of the original.

Best of all is a "strip-club version" of their breakout hit, "A Girl Like You." Heavy on the trombone and lyric-free (aside from saucy shouts of the title), the swinging track perfectly captures all the sleazy ambience it's meant to. You'll be fishing for dollar bills to clench between your teeth. And on the whole, this specially priced CD is worth a panty full of those Georges.

Heather Nova is a little angry. However, unlike that to-remain-nameless unhappy waif currently polluting the airwaves (Alannis Morrisette), this girl's words of ire come wrapped in a beautiful voice. After a listen to Heather's debut, ***Oyster*** (Sony), it will become startlingly obvious that *this* is the record that should be going platinum.

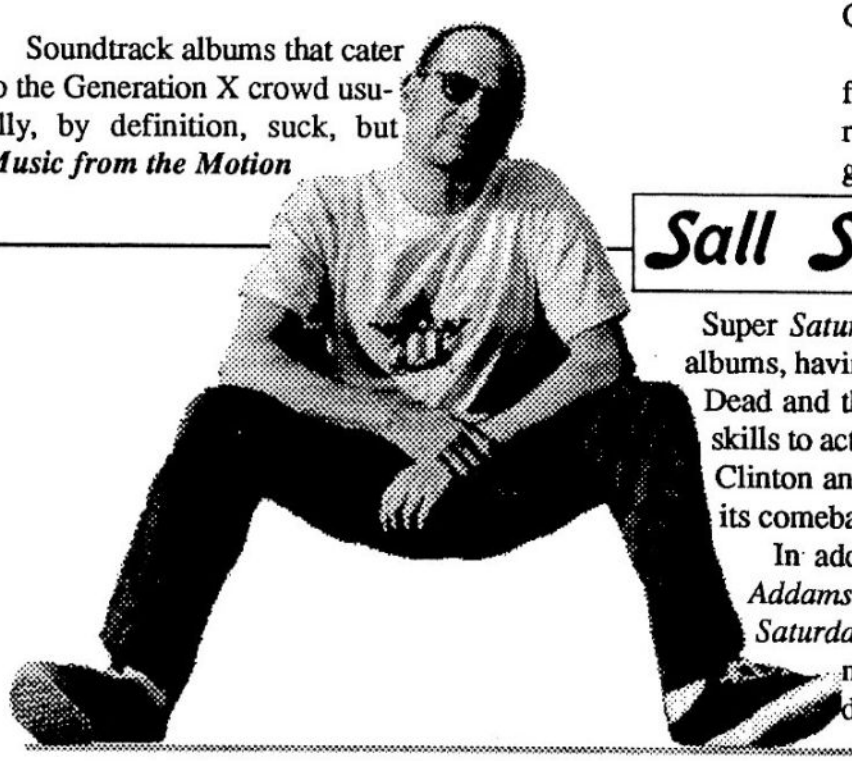
The single, "Walk This World," is one of the year's best, fueled by a driving chorus and dreamlike lyrics. For the remainder of the record, Nova holds the tone down as her subject matter (i.e. domestic abuse) grows in seriousness. This is one of those CDs that demands several listens for before it lets you warm up next to it, but the time invested pays off. Nova is one to watch.

Soundtrack albums that cater to the Generation X crowd usually, by definition, suck, but ***Music from the Motion Picture Mallrats*** (MCA) is a happy exception. Utilizing the tried-and-true method of weaving choice bits of dialogue between tunes (*a la Pulp Fiction*), the album captures the loose, anything-goes style of the sadly unseen film.

Weezer performs the song "Suzanne," which ran over the end credits. Most bands contributing to soundtracks turn in throwaways, but that's not the case here. Other standouts include Squirtgun's bass-hopping "Social," Wax's "Mallrats," Belly's "Broken" and the Goops' remake of the R&B standard "Build Me Up Buttercup," the Kevin Smith-directed video for which is a riot.

Also appearing are Elastica, Archers of Loaf, Sponge and Bush, among others, with star Jason Lee delivering his "Post-Coital Techno Boogie" sandwiched between two songs.

Worth singling out is the disc's excellent packaging, which features a Magic Eye picture on the front, Smith in Batman regalia on the actual disc, which, when removed, reveals a great, R-rated joke. **H**



Sall Steers Saturday's Ship

Super *Saturday Morning* producer Ralph Sall is no stranger to tribute albums, having previously assembled discs paying homage to the Grateful Dead and the Eagles (we won't hold that against him). He has lent his skills to acts as varied as Midnight Oil, Coolio, Jane's Addiction, George Clinton and General Public, for which he served behind the boards on its comeback hit, "I'll Take You There."

In addition, Sall was soundtrack supervisor for the films *Speed*, *Addams Family Values*, *Threesome* and *Less Than Zero*. The new *Saturday Morning*, however, appears to be his crowning achievement. Sall spoke with **HITCH** for a few minutes about the disc for which he will always be revered in our hearts.

HITCH: The idea behind *Saturday Morning* is a brilliant one, but at the same time, pretty simple. So how did you become the first to think of it?

Sall: I think that the best ideas for concept or tribute albums are simple ones. They're the ones where people say, "Oh, that's obvious. I can't believe someone hasn't done this already." The Eagles tribute that I conceived was like that, and so is *Saturday*. I am, at heart, just a fan, and I still go to the record stores four times a week, so I think I have the spirit of a true fan. That's why there are 20 songs on it, as opposed to the normal 10 or 12. It's for the people who, like me, care about these things. I think these ideas are in the air and my radar might be a little more sensitive than others, and I obviously have the luck (and ability) to execute my concepts.

HITCH: Were the artists given any ground rules or were they given free reign?

Sall: I made a master list of songs I wanted to do, completely subjective, just the songs that I liked. Then I imagined who would have performed them if they were "real rock songs." Then I contacted the artists and suggested they do the specific song I had picked for them. In some instances I suggested one of two, but normally I had the song picked before we entered the studio. My idea was to make the ultimate party record, the killer alternative album first and the cartoon album second. So I wanted the songs to stand next to the artists' own works comfortably, so people could go, "Hey, that's a great Butthole Surfers song...hey, that's *Underdog*!?" It was a common mantra in the studio: "Hey, this is more fun than I thought it would be!" and "Hey, I can't get this fucking song out of my head!" It was fun.

HITCH: Anyone fight over particular songs?

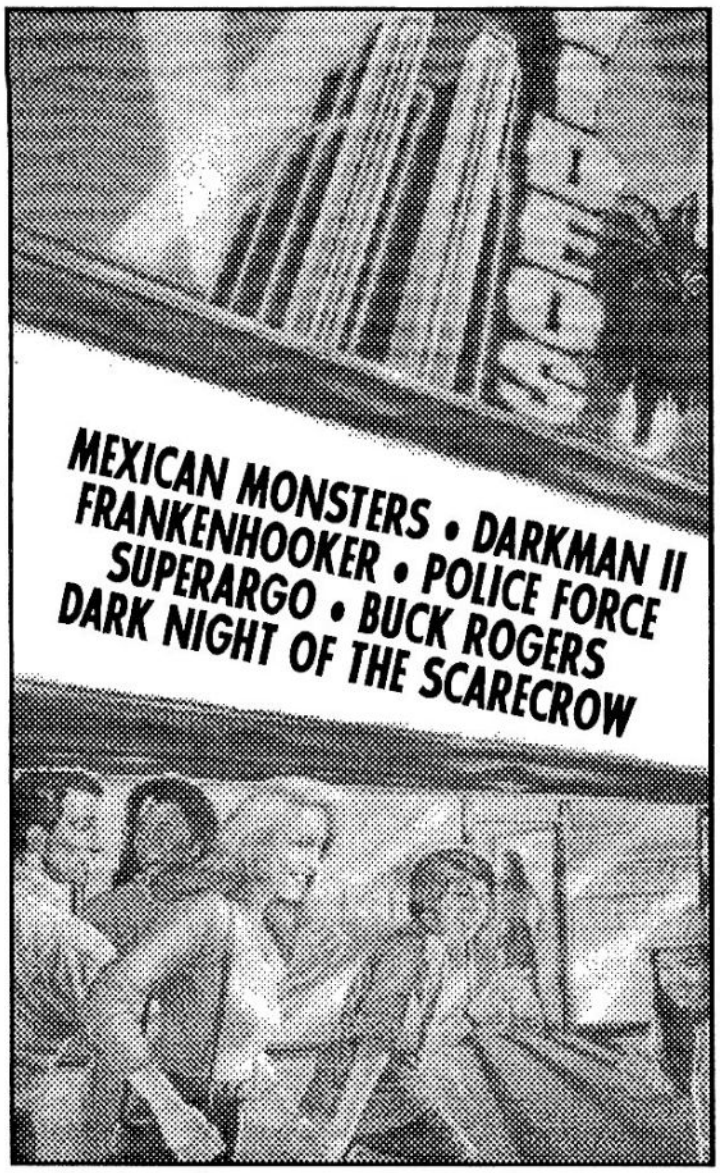
Sall: Certainly there were artists who would have wanted to do songs already taken, but my method avoided an entire album of people doing *Scooby-Doo*, for instance.

HITCH: I'm surprised some of the bands didn't jump on the really strong instrumentals, like *Peanuts* or *SuperFriends*. Given that there are scores of cartoons out there, most all with catchy openings, can we look forward to a Volume 2?

Sall: The only instrumental is *Jonny Quest*, because I thought that actually sounded like a Rev. Horton Heat song. I consciously avoided instrumentals on the album because I wanted to focus on the songs. And, yes, if enough people buy *Saturday Morning*, I'll do a Volume 2. I already have many picked out, but mostly tell your friends to pick up a copy of this record so we can have a chance to do the sequel.

HITCH: How do you think Scooby-Doo and Shaggy were able to defy gravity by running in mid-air?

Sall: I think it's a great attribute of many cartoon characters to endure hellacious bodily insult and injury and come out unscathed in the next frame. I wish life were like that. **H**



Mexican Monsters on the March
(199?)
Something Weird Video
★★★★★

In this big spoonful of queso, 10 black-and-white schlock classics from Mexico have been heavily edited into featurettes (basically, all the boring stuff has been taken out), leaving you, the viewer, with what has to be the ultimate tape featuring fake-looking monsters, sexy señoritas and lots of trilled Rs. Unless you were swimming naked in a room full of Funditos, you couldn't ask for more fun.

The Western *Riders of the Storm* has a hooded hero dueling amidst tumbleweed with a wolfman, a batman and a headless horseman, while *Return of the Monster* has a fazed, Frankenstein-like creature kidnap a child, roar and find his head smoking, all while his creator (whose assistant is a talking skeleton) go *loco*, prior to an assault by pitchfork. The space-themed *Ship of Monsters* features those lovable "monstruos de las galaxias." Their names are Uk, Utirr, Tagual, Tor and Zok, but to lessen confusion, we'll refer to them as a cyclops, belching alien, robot, hairy tarantula-man and dinosaur bones. Together, they turn a woman into a vampire (she has an incredible musical interlude) and one of them gets a slingshot to the eye.

Adventures to the Center of the Earth offers cardboard bats, rat-devouring gargoyles and other assorted cavern beasts, while *The Baron of Terror* (he of the forked tongue and pulsating cranium) administers his kiss of death to the necks of various lovelies.

Also featured are condensed versions of *Dr. Satan*, the melting skeleton epic *Madness for Terror*, *Museum of Horror* (similar to *House of Wax*), *Vengeance of the Hanged* and the no-explanation-necessary *She Wolf*.

None of the films are dubbed or subtitled, but it makes no difference. For the ultimate in south-of-the-border trash *peliculas*, settle down with a Patio dinner or two and revel in *Mexican Monsters on the March*.

Class of Nuke 'Em High Part III: The Good, the Bad and the Subhumanoid
(1995)
Troma Team Video
★★☆☆☆

A rather disappointing follow-up to the hysterical anarchy of *Part II: Subhumanoid Meltdown*, Troma's third entry in the *Nuke 'Em High* series has almost none of the charm that made its predecessor so fun. In an attempt to make up for that loss, it has more fart sounds than perhaps any other Troma effort.

Affable wrestler Brick Bronsky reprises his role as Roger Smith, who has now become mayor of Tromaville. Bronsky also plays Roger's collegiate son Adlai and Adlai's long-lost evil twin. Adlai becomes the source of much rejoicing when it is discovered that his glowing hand, when stuck in the nuclear reactor, can prevent Tromaville from experiencing another meltdown. The bad people, led by a Ph.D. with an eye patch and his rogue's gallery of various oozing mutants, want to use Adlai's powers for the forces of the corrupt and baneful.

Bronsky makes the whole thing watchable, even when the patchwork script threatens to fall to pieces. As was the case in *Part II*, the Toxic Avenger livens things up with a brief cameo, but here it's an instance of too little, too late. Worse, Troma goes *way* overboard this time with the self-referential thing. By title alone, *Class of Nuke 'Em High Part IV: Battle of the Bikini Subhumanoids* promises to be better.

Stepmonster
(1992)
New Horizons Home Video
★☆☆☆☆

This kiddie flick from the hip pocket of producer Roger Corman has several things going against it from the get-go, but the most crippling has got to be cardboard star Alan Thicke. The former sitcom dad plays an architect who takes his wife and comic-book-addicted son camping. Mom disappears in the woods and is feared dead, and Son suspects the tragedy is the work of a monster he often reads about in four-color pages.

Six months later, Thicke gets thick for one of his clients, the semi-sultry Robin Riker, and they plan to marry. The boy, however,

Videos reviewed in **HITCH** receive star ratings based not on artistic merit, but on levels of enjoyment, from ★☆☆☆☆ (as much fun as a funeral) to ★★★★★ (fun, fun, fun 'til daddy takes the TV away).

Various *Mexican Monsters*

suspects she is a monster, confirmed when he spies her killing joggers as he's watching neighbor Ami Dolenz strip through his binoculars. (Only from Corman would a children's film feature parental mortality, the slaughter of innocents and voyeurism as plot devices.) He even goes so far as to believe Riker is responsible for his Mom's fate, so he vows to prevent the marriage. Personally, I think I'd just let bygones be bygones and coerce a looker like Riker into a little step-incest. But that's just me.

This dull story is drenched in kerosene by the time Corey Feldman appears to send it up in flames. Only Dolenz – who's incredibly cute but still has acting one role down pat, that of snobby bitch (hmmm...must take after her dad) – kept me from firmly planting my thumb on the button marked "FF." And why is it that every Corman child star, from *The Skateboard Kid* to that whole *Munchies* oeuvre, appears to be the biggest nerd the casting director could find, with a horrible haircut and no screen presence?

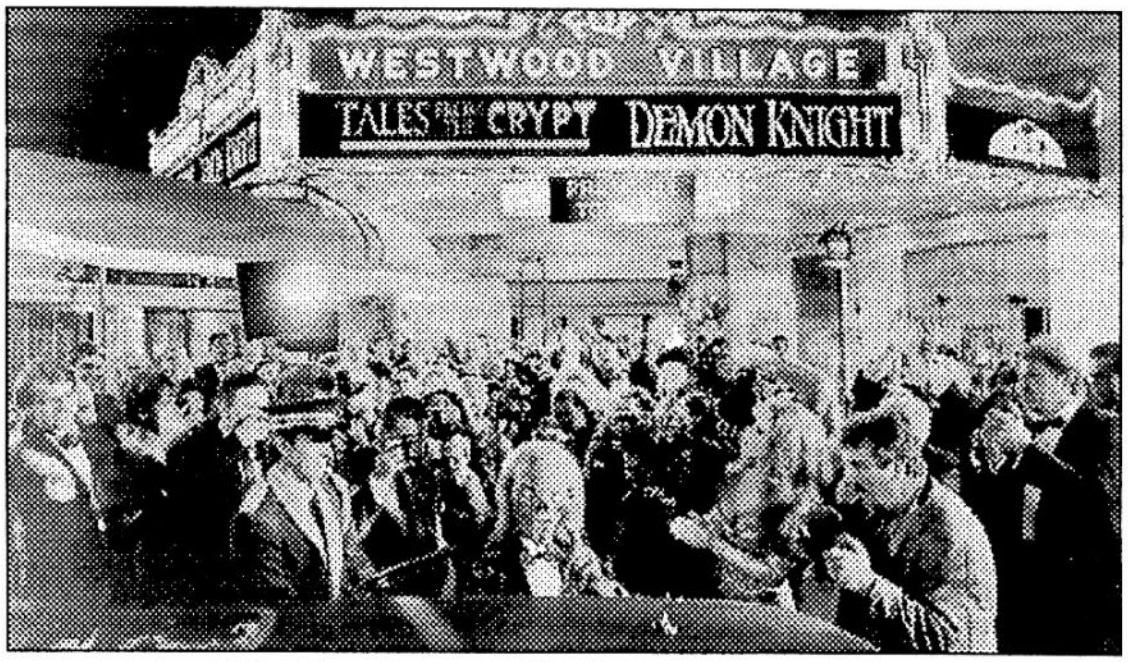
Two Evil Eyes
(1990)
Media Home Entertainment
★★★★★

A pair of Edgar Allan Poe tales are adapted in this virtually unknown – but exceptional – horror anthology, directed by genre masters George Romero and Dario Argento. Of the two, Argento's is the best, but both deliver the goods and leave you aching for a third story.

In Romero's "The Facts in the Case of Mr. Valdemar," Adrienne Barbeau plays the wife of a dying, rich, elderly man. With her lover (Ramy Zada), who also happens to be her husband's doctor, Barbeau schemes to tamper with her spouse's will so she will inherit his millions. Zada hypnotizes the poor bastard to aid them to this end. When the guy dies while under their spell, they stick them in the basement meat freezer until their plan can be carried out. While Valdemar's body is dead, his soul is not (as a result of the hypnosis), so he comes back to life for a spirited round of revenge.

In his best work in years, Romero skillfully crafts his segment to elicit some well-earned scares. His overhead shot of Valdemar's frozen corpse emerging from the basement steps and glancing upward is visibly unnerving.

Harvey Keitel plays a grisly crime photographer named Usher (he of the fallen house) in Argento's interpretation of "The Black Cat," which also combines elements from "The Pit and the Pendulum" and "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym." When a hissing feline mysteriously appears in his darkroom, Usher slowly begins a side trip into dementia, complete with a prophetic hallucination, culminating in the murder of his musician girlfriend. To cover his tracks, he holes her up Amontillado-style in the walls of their home, but the cat has designs to foil his plans.



The Cryptkeeper: *Knight* in shining tuxedo

Argento's direction is impressive, with his camera jumping from the point-of-view of passive viewer to that of the cat, Keitel's fingers and even a swinging pendulum blade. The manner in which this tale unfolds like a puzzle to its clever climax is a testament to Argento's style as a storyteller. Keitel's genius is evidenced in his maniacal reading of this priceless line, when his girlfriend cries over the missing feline: "It's a *fucking cat! Meow! Meow!* A *cat*!"

Tales from the Crypt Presents Demon Knight
(1994)
MCA/Universal Home Video
★★★★★

The first of three planned big-screen outings for the cult HBO series, Ernest Dickerson's *Demon Knight* is the finest major-studio horror film since *Poltergeist*. Full of state-of-the-art special effects and the *Crypt*'s unique blend of dread and deadpan humor, the film is a fun ride from beginning to end, even if I still think they should be making anthology films.

The story, which never feels padded, is an updated spin on the stock "good vs. evil" formula with Billy Zane as "the Collector," one of the devil's minions, chasing Brayker (Bill Sadler) across time for possession of an ancient key that, if in the wrong hands, has the power to unleash all that is unholy upon the world. Brayker holes up in a hotel-cum-mission, where its downtrodden residents become unwilling participants in the Collector's very dangerous game.

While fine support is added by the motel's residents, including whore Brenda Bakke, deranged postman Charles Fleischer, redneck Thomas Haden Church and the great Dick Miller, this movie belongs to Zane, whose bald, smiling mug belies the undiluted diablerie within. A reliable player for a few years now, Zane has never been given the right vehicle to showcase his innumerable talents, and his mischievous antics here prove he's got plenty. Why isn't this guy a major star? Hopefully, Robert Evans' proposed adaptation of the indigo superhero *The Phantom* should give Zane his much-deserved breakthrough.

As with the episodes' patented tricks, very little in *Demon Knight* is what it seems initially, right down to the twist ending. Even the film's framing device commences with a clever beginning, and couldn't hurt to be expanded. Given the strength of this premiere chapter – with genuine shocks, a healthy dose of humor and an unusually high count of well-rounded breasts for a studio-backed film – the next two *Crypt* features are not to be missed. And indeed, the upcoming *Bordello of Blood* sounds deliriously promising.

Classroom Scare Films, Vol. 2: Health Horrors!
(1994)
Something Weird Video
★★★★☆

You no doubt remember sitting in grade school, struggling to stay awake as the rickety projector unspooled one of many god-awful educational shorts the library owned, full of good intentions but bad fashions, with the message always overshadowed by the amateurish acting and the decades-old decor. Now you can recreate these warm memories from

your own couch with Something Weird's second volume of *Classroom Scare Films*, which compiles eight of the wildest films designed to teach kids something about their bodies, but only ended up making them snicker.

And it's easy to see why. Find me a single fourth-grader in America who, while watching the classic *VD: Truths and Consequences*, wouldn't giggle upon witnessing a curly-topped boy ask his father, "Dad, I've got this strange discharge coming out of my penis. Do you think it could be VD?" Hell, see if *you* don't cringe at the sight of a prepubescent girl being placed in the stirrups for a quick once-over from her dimwit of a doctor, *before the widespread advent of rubber gloves!* For further discomfort, check out the black doctor with the greasy mustache and beard, joyfully discussing syphilis and its "hard chancres" as if he were talking about his kids.

Following a one-two punch of sexual disease pix comes a warning on scoliosis, complete with several unflinching shots of youngsters' uneven backs, more crooked than any Kennedy. Some are so out of whack, the poor kids look like Victor Hugo novels waiting to be written. The anti-smoking film also carries an air of uneasiness, with its demonstration of a ventriloquist's dummy sucking on the sticks. All kids know Charlie McCarthy and his ilk are frightening enough; to see them imitating your decrepit uncle is like planting the seeds of mental instability.

Two films on the human mouth are included, with one showing cool X-ray footage of a guy swallowing food, and the other demonstrating how to floss our teeth so thoroughly that the whole process could last well over three hours. Closing the tape are a reel on prescription drugs and one on alcohol, which is clearly the better of the two since, to demonstrate booze's intoxicating effects on the body, the filmmakers readily pour vodka into the tank of a goldfish until the little denizen of the demi-deep is happily swimming in care-free loop-de-loops. Now *that's* entertainment.

Darkman II: The Return of Durant
(1994)
MCA/Universal Home Video
★★★★☆

Made-for-video movies usually signify the kiss of mediocrity, but this follow-up to Sam Raimi's 1990 sleeper hit is thoroughly agreeable. While Bradford May has taken over the directorial reins, the pulp spirit of the original remains intact.

Stepping in for Liam Neeson, the chiseled features of Arnold Vosloo fill the title character's jet-black hat and overcoat quite nicely, even conveying more believability than Mr. Schindler did. A few years after Darkman forced his arch-enemy Robert Durant (Larry Drake) toward death, our hero is still having problems getting his synthetic skin masks to last past the 99-minute threshold, until he discovers a local scientist who is having greater success with similar research.

The scientist is murdered when he won't sell his property to a group of thugs employed by Durant — who, it appears — was secretly in a coma. Durant is itching to earn another fortune selling laser guns to whichever country is willing to put up the millions. Darkman vows revenge.

Though admittedly missing Raimi's unparalleled vivacity with the camera, May does a fine job of continuing the Darkman legend. Hopefully, Universal will commission a few more of these adventures. Set to hit stores soon is the third chapter (filmed back-to-back with this one), under the title of *Darkman III: Die, Darkman, Die!* No joke.

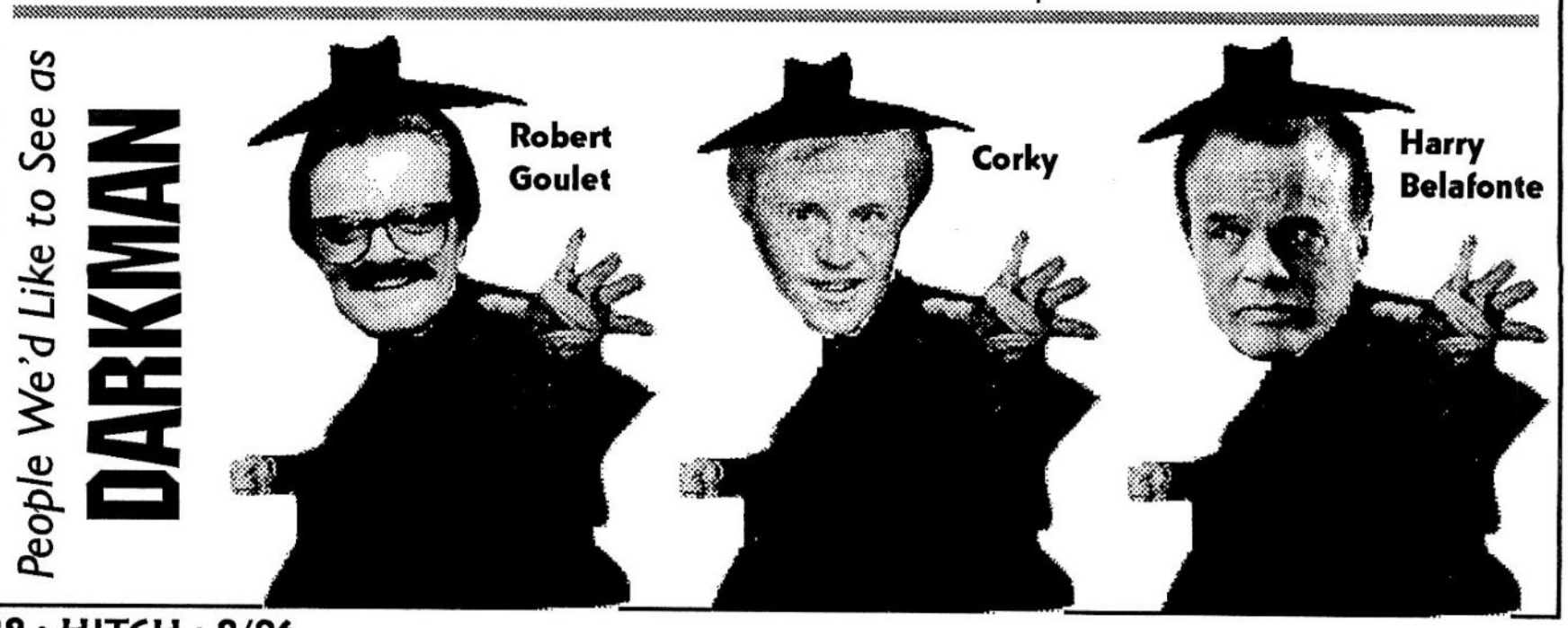
Buck Rogers in the 25th Century
(1979)
MCA/Universal Home Video
★★★★☆

When I was in third grade, this nerdy kid in my class named Tim Clark used to play Buck Rogers every day on the playground. Benefiting from *Star Wars*' coattails, the TV series starring Gil Gerard was then in full-swing, and Tim lived out his hero-worship fantasies on the Big Toy five days a week, usually alone. He was forever attempting to recruit a fellow classmate to join his adventures, with the stipulation that they had to assume the role of Twiki, the annoying robot who constantly went "Bede-bede-bede-bede," and, in accordance with Tim's flimsy grasp on reality, you had to do it *just like that.*

Though asked, I never gave in. In fact, I can only recall an Oriental kid doing so. Most often, though, it was just Tim, running across the blacktop with his red windbreaker tied around his neck like a cape. No matter that Buck neither wore a cape nor had the ability to fly; everyone just let Tim be Tim.

Based on the classic comic strip, the *very* '70s pilot film (released theatrically prior to its cathode-ray premiere) to the series is prob-

ably the only episode you need to see. The brainchild of *Battlestar Galactica* guru Glen A. Larson, *Buck* is a hokey and simplistic space opera with more sexual innuendo than the network suits must've realized. Even Twiki gets in on the fun, complaining he's about to freeze his ball bearings off. And



check out the 007-esque opening credits, at once thoroughly sexist and repulsive, the latter courtesy of a ridiculous theme ballad.

An astronaut circa 1987, Buck's ship gets off-course by about 500 years, which he doesn't realize at first. He is discovered floating in space by the evil Draconians, who bring him to their base, where the first thing they do is get him stoned. The Draconians are led by hot princess Pamela Hensley, whose skimpy costumes forever threaten to reveal her Milky Way. When Buck is sent back to earth, the wonderfully dimpled Col. Wilma (Erin Gray) thinks him a spy before realizing the truth and enlisting him to fight the Draconians.

In a film full of gotta-see-it-to-believe-it scenes, the true highlight comes midway at the Draconian ball, where Buck, the hip, cool dude that he is, coerces the band (a guy with a synthesizer) to play some of that ancient music form known as "rock." The man responds with a disco-heavy tune that is anything but rock. Buck doesn't seem to care, snapping his fingers, puttin' on the ritz and announcing, "Let's boogie!"

Superargo and the Faceless Giants
(1967)
Something Weird Video
★★★☆☆

For those unfamiliar with the Italian superhero scene, Superargo is a government agent who wears red tights and a black mask. He has the power to jump high, crack vases with his mind and...well, that's about it. But he drives a really cool car and knows how to kick people. Lucky for him, that's about all he needs to defeat a race of robot men in this silly adventure.

The world's greatest athletes are being kidnapped and turned into automatrons with dishpans on their heads; via electronic transmission, they are ordered to commit heinous crimes. Contrary to what the title may suggest, these emotion-free bad guys aren't giants (they're hovering around 6 feet, just like you and me) and they aren't faceless, either (though they've got pantyhose slipped over their noggins, their features are visible, and make them look like Powder).

Superargo is dispatched to stop the androids and, with the help of an overweight minority, goes to the woods where they...well, hell, I don't remember. I just watched it yesterday and I have no recollection. Perhaps that was the intention of the filmmakers: to turn the viewers into faceless giants themselves. If so, they nearly succeeded. Though the pace isn't as hurried as films of this genre usually call for, the film has its unbelievable moments of delirious, just-what-the-hell-am-I-watching fun. It's just that I can't recall any of them. A sequel to the probably better *Superargo vs. Diabolicus*, this film is followed by a fairly lengthy Popeye cartoon based on the Aladdin legend.

Superargo, in a rare moment of action.

Race with the Devil
(1975)
Fox Video
★★★☆☆

Two couples with a new RV hit the road for a little rest and relaxation, but instead find themselves with a heap of murder and mayhem. After a hard day of motorcycling, Peter Fonda and Warren Oates witness a Satanic cult sacrifice one of its members in front of a burning tree.

When Oates' nagging wife Loretta Swit yells at them to come inside, the bloodthirsty coven realizes someone has witnessed their ritual and pursues the happy families, even jumping on their speeding trailer.

From there, it's a rip-roarin' game of cat-and-mouse played out over the countryside and makeshift highways, with the shrieking mice getting a swift lesson in matters of the occult, culminating with the murder of their dog. The RV gets torn to shreds in the cult's attempts to run it off the road, but the final straw comes when Hot Lips goes to make the men some coffee and a couple of rattlesnakes pop out of the shelf.

If only the set-up weren't so long, this would be a much better movie. The final third is pretty engrossing, despite being able to predict the ending minutes prior. At least the filmmakers decided to take the brave route and not make it a happy one.

The Willies
(1990)
Prism Entertainment
★★★☆☆

Three annoying boys try to scare the wits out of each other while camping outside by telling horror stories that aren't the least bit scary in *The Willies*, a stupidly titled anthology film. Though the film is comprised of five stories, it says a lot about the whole thing that three of them are fired off in rat-a-tat-tat fashion before the opening credits. (It also says a lot that four *Growing Pains* cast members have roles in the picture.)

In those three tales, each under three minutes, a fat woman bites into a rat at a chicken stand, an old fart dies of fright on a haunted carnival ride and a freshly bathed poodle explodes into a puddle of pink goo when her owner tries to dry her in the microwave. Thus, the other two stories are padded out to near-excruciating lengths to fill the allotted 90 minutes.

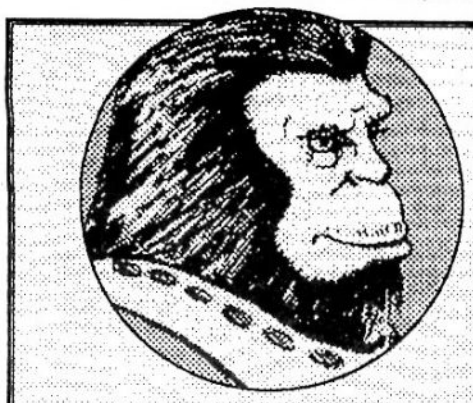
The first of these concerns a peer-abused grade school nerd who sees a monster in the bathroom. When he returns to his classroom with wet pants, his teacher and classmates believe he's just trying to avoid the fractions quiz. But, of course, the non-believers soon learn the truth...the hard way. The last story stars an obese lisping youth who likes to pull wings off of houseflies and glue the bugs onto dioramas, as well as use them as ingredients for cookies he tries to pass off on the girls at school. The kid is so detestably aggravating that you can't wait to see him get his, which occurs when some flies trapped in a jar with a local farmer's "miracle manure" grow to giant (fake-looking) size and yank his arms off. The scene where he wakes up from a nightmare and reaches for his asthma inhaler, only to breathe in a mouthful of maggots, is better, though.

Although pacing is not the director's forte, the movie is kind of fun. The framing device is ridiculous, however, and the "twist ending" is so *not*.

The Phantom of the Opera
(1962)
N/A
★★☆☆☆

Sadly, Hammer's take on Leroux's classic tale of beauty and the beast fails to live up to expectations. Much like an opera itself, the movie is surrounded by beautiful and elaborate sets, but little else, as the story plods along its uninvolving route.

This is not to say that Herbert Lom's phantom isn't good; indeed, it is, but as the story is structured, the phantom has never really been the star. This leaves the weight of



Damn Dirty Animated Apes

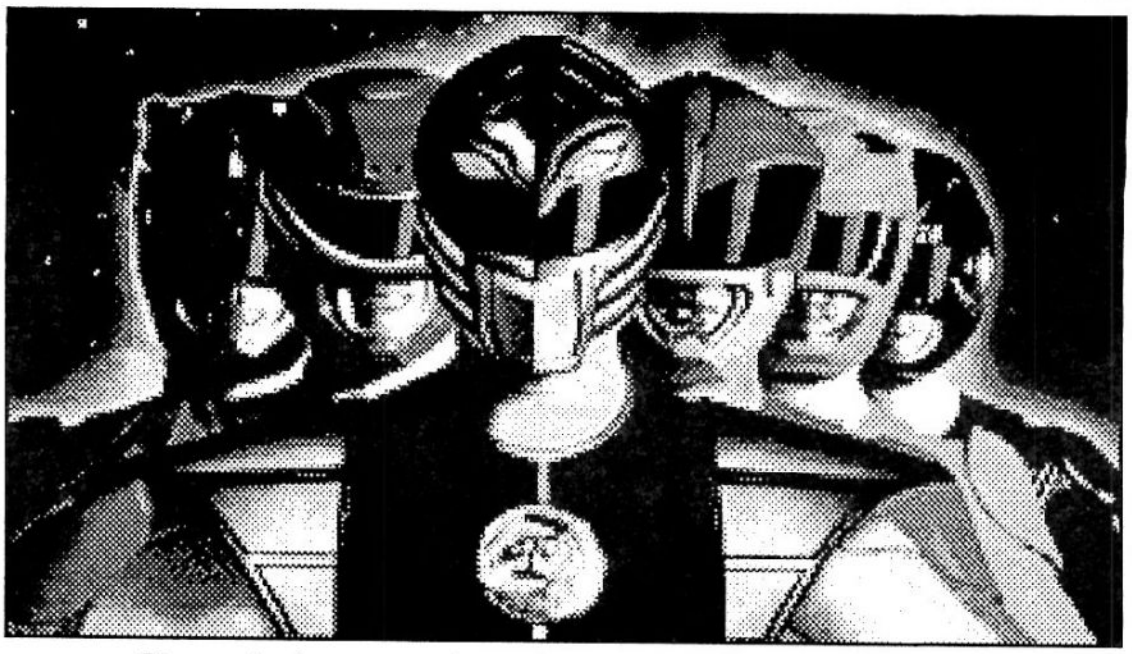
Astronauts break the time barrier and land on the Earth of the future, which, much to their surprise, is ruled by...hey, haven't we been through this already?

After five movies and a live-action TV show, those damn dirty apes were still going at it in the 13-episode cartoon series *Return to the Planet of the Apes*, which graced Saturday morning airwaves in the fall of 1976, available on tape from various bootleggers.

Cursed with that vintage '70s animation look — lots of still shots and characters who never even think about moving and talking at the same time — *Return* has not aged particularly well. Its quick demise can probably be attributed to its inability to decide on a target audience. It's a little difficult to keep a pre-K viewer's attention when there are talking apes, time travel and telepathic mutants to be kept up with, don't you think? I can picture in my mind millions of 5-year-olds flipping over to catch the end of *Scooby-Doo*.

Though its plotlines might be better suited for an older audience, this *was* supposed to be a kid's show. Alas, there is no Chuck Heston here damning things to hell and there's no humor to speak of either, save a jaw-dropping sequence in which a hay-seed ape farmer listens to his radio blaring out "I'm Going Humanoid Over You," a hilarious tune complete with hillbilly stomp backbeat.

For whatever the reasons, *Return to the Planet of the Apes* found the decade-long saga of talking apes ending not with a bang, but a poorly dubbed whimper. —*CH*



Six stark threats to American parents' al-*Mighty* dollar.

the film on the shoulders of everyone else, who happen to disassociate the audience almost immediately with their eternally stuffy demeanors.

Aside from an attack on a lowly opera house worker, there aren't too many thrills to be had. Although it looks great, it ultimately falls on deaf ears.

Mighty Morphin Power Rangers: The Movie
(1995)
Fox Video
★☆☆☆☆

As opposed to *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers: The Cash-In*? In 20 years, this thing will be like nostalgic gold. Today, however, it is what it is: a lifeless piece of crap.

When not kicking, the Power Rangers are just six annoying high school kids, and they do *everything* together: skydive, rollerblade, hang out with a robot that constantly screams, "Ay-yi-yi!" Don't these imbeciles ever study?

When Ivan Ooze comes out of hiding to destroy the world, the Power Rangers put on their silly costumes and kick. They kick a lot of monsters that turn into slimy goop. While they are kicking, the Power Rangers say dumb things like, "Have a nice trip! See you next fall!" Har-de-har-har. That might be funny to a being from another planet, but not to me. I heard that in second grade.

These kids are so cloying that I want to kick them myself. All six of them. Very, very hard. The pink one especially deserves a good heel to that snotty smile of hers. Take *that*, Kimberly!

Jackie Chan's Police Force
(1985)
N/A
★★★★☆

Fans of the Chan man have long championed this film as his finest hour, and while it still retains some of the silliness of the Hong Kong cinema that I have little tolerance for, I'd have to agree.

As an eccentric but dedicated cop, Chan is assigned to protect a young woman from the mob, much to the chagrin of his moped-driving girlfriend. People keep trying to kill the woman, but Chan is there to kick all their asses. As always, the action sequences are top-notch, and Chan outdoes himself in a scene where he chases — and hangs onto — a speeding bus while fending off various mobsters.

Unfortunately, the movie suffers from a bit in the momentum department without a solid storyline. The stunts are fabulous to watch, but without a cohesive plot that all the greatest action films have (such as *Die Hard* or *Speed*), upping the danger factor does little for the emotions.

Terror at the Opera
(1988)
Southgate Entertainment
★★★★★
Trauma
(1993)
Worldvision Home Video
★★☆☆☆

Dario Argento's *Terror at the Opera* and *Trauma*, though years apart, share the basic plot of a young woman who finds everyone around her being murdered in the most gruesome ways by a mysterious killer in black. However, the two films couldn't be more different, as one represents the director at his deliciously eerie best, while the other stands among his worst work.

The far superior of the two, *Opera*, finds a debuting diva fending off opening-night jitters just as various stagehands and behind-the-scenes staffers fail to fend off a masked madman. In a disturbing twist, the girl is forced to watch her friends die, as the killer tapes nails

beneath her eyelids so that if she blinks, she'll tear her eyes up. In a typical – but no less enthralling – Argento move, he places the POV with the girl during the murders, so we see what she sees, through nails and all.

His flashy camerawork doesn't end there. In the scene where the killer is discovered, ravens fly about the opera house, and so does the camera. One woman is shot as she looks through a peephole, only to see a bullet coming at her in slow motion. In the biggest gross-out, a man is stabbed upward through the neck; Argento's camera shows us the inside of the guy's mouth as the blade pokes about.

Marred only by a Pollyanna ending and horrendous heavy metal, *Opera* proves Argento can rightly be called Italy's answer to Hitchcock. The suspenseful pace he builds and disturbing images he creates are unmatched by any horror director working today. Unfortunately, like Hitchcock, he has his share of misfires, and *Trauma* is one of them. His own daughter Asia plays the film's protagonist, an anorexic waif whose parents are decapitated by a headhunter using an electronic strangulation gadget. It doesn't make a lick of sense until the very end, and isn't the least bit engaging until then, either.

Even with an able cast (most notably, Piper Laurie), the story just isn't there. Here, Argento's editing is too jumpy and abrupt to weave a line of cohesiveness. Unlike *Opera*, which drips creepiness from its first frames, *Trauma* finds its only shudders in the scene where Argento lovingly films his own daughter removing her top.

Basket Case 2
(1990)
Shapiro Glickenhaus Home Video
★★★☆☆

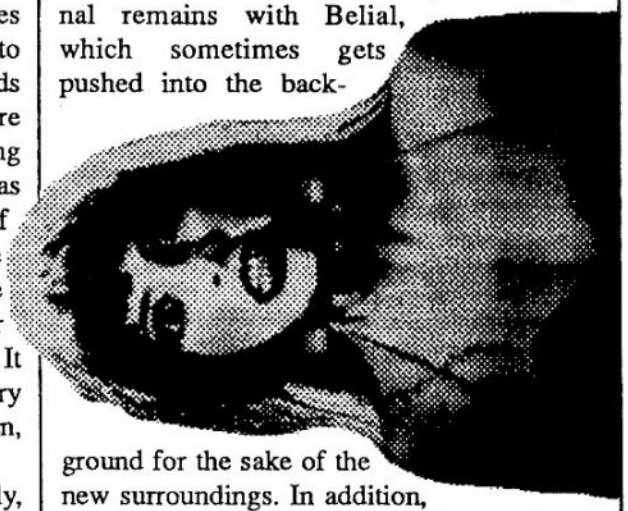
Basket Case 3: The Progeny
(1992)
MCA/Universal Home Video
★★★☆☆

Frankenhooker
(1990)
Shapiro Glickenhaus Home Video
★★★★☆

Love him or hate him, you have to admit that Frank Henenlotter, if nothing, is one-of-a-kind. His films, of which there are only five, are all bizarre hybrids of horror and. Consider *Basket Case*, his beast-in-a-box tale for which he is probably best known: A young man carries around his surgically separated (and hideously malformed) Siamese twin Belial in a basket. In a skewed display of brotherly love, Belial emerges to eat those who dare come between him and his sibling.

Basket Case 2 finds the brothers recovering from a nasty accident in the confines of the secluded abode of Annie Ross, a matronly figure whose attic is home to a slew of misunderstood freaks. In near-parallel storylines, both brothers find love, with Belial's relationship yielding a basket full of babies. This leads up to *Basket Case 3: The Progeny*, in which Ross takes all the freaks on the road to see her son, no normal human himself. In both films, meddling townspeople and nosy reporters threaten to expose the extended family of sheltered oddities.

While enjoyable, the two films suffer from a problem often found in sequels: coming up with something new. Henenlotter does an admirable job by placing the brothers here and there, but the central novelty of the original remains with Belial, which sometimes gets pushed into the background for the sake of the new surroundings. In addition, while clearly delivered tongue-in-cheek, the scripts have little in the way of actual jokes to support their lighthearted tone.



A step in the right direction, *Frankenhooker* provides a delirious take on the Frankenstein legend, with crazed electrical worker James Lorinz wanting to bring his dead girlfriend back to life. Since she was killed by a runaway lawnmower, though, he has to reassemble her, using other people's limbs. Wanting nothing but the best, he feeds a potent form of crack to a room full of hookers, collects the desired appendages and revives his true love. Problem is, when she comes to, she thinks she's a prostitute.

As the title heroine, former skin-mag model Patty Mullen gives a great comic performance. Lorinz, who has to carry most of the film on his own, is a likable average Joe. With this film, Henenlotter pulls out all the stops, and nothing's sacred; one of the better bad-taste gags has a pimp named Zorro knocked unconscious by the flying head of one of his girls.

Dark Night of the Scarecrow
(1981)
Fox Video
★★★★★

When this was first broadcast, my brother and I saw it as kids over at our Uncle Bill's house, and it scared us to no end. (Uncle Bill took some post-movie pleasure scaring us, too.) It's certainly held up well over the years, remaining an effective creepfest so disturbing and cold-hearted that I can't imagine how it ever became a made-for-TV movie.

L.A. Law retard Larry Drake plays Bubba, a farmboy retard whose best friend is a little girl. When she is nearly killed by a dog, Bubba saves her life, but the townspeople jump to conclusions and point the finger at the simpleton. With guns in tow, a hastily assembled vigilante mob, led by postman Charles Durning, track Bubba down to his hiding place in the scarecrow and kill him. After it is revealed that Bubba was wholly innocent, the men cower in fear as a scarecrow begins showing up on their property.

What follows is, admittedly, your standard revenge-from-the-dead tale, but the men are so completely unlikable that watching one drown in a grain elevator is cause for celebration. Durning plays his hell-bent mailman shtick to the hilt, while the supporting cast of various dentally impaired hicks and rednecks provides much enjoyment. This may be the only horror film whose ominous character is a moronic tatterdemalion, but oh, what a film! Director Frank deFelitta never lets the pace bog down, right up to the twisted, gotta-see-it-to-believe-it ending.

This is how TV movies were made before hacks like Judith Light and Valerie Bertinelli jumped in.

The Mysterious Monsters
(1975)
N/A
★★★☆☆

In Search of Noah's Ark
(1976)
Vestron Video
★☆☆☆☆

In this Schick Sunn Classic, narrator Peter Graves warns us that *The Mysterious Monsters* may be the most shocking film we'll ever see. Using "exclusive footage" and interviews with suspect scientists, the film examines the unproven legends of Bigfoot, the Abominable Snowman and the Loch Ness Monster. Heavy emphasis is placed on Bigfoot (also known as "Skunk Ape, Noxi-Monster and Mo-Mo"), with numerous mentions of his horrid stench.

With the highlights resting in recreations of local yokels coming face-to-face with Bigfoot, the most absurd moment features a woman being hypnotized by one of those spinning wheels. People's claims of Bigfoot sightings are validated by such expert advice as, "I don't know what the breast of a gargantuan is supposed to look like, but..."

In this Schick Sunn Classic, some bearded narrator warns us that *In Search of Noah's Ark* may be the most shocking film we'll ever see. Using "exclusive footage" and interviews with suspect scientists, the film examines the unproven theory that the remains of the great Biblical ship are on the verge of being discov-

ered.

With the highlights resting in recreations of animals boarding the ark (with the chimps in it for comic effect), the most absurd moment features Noah's uncanny ability at casting spells on raccoons.

Mr. Bill's 20th Anniversary Special
(1995)
Starmaker Entertainment
★★★★☆

Twenty damn years, and Mr. Bill – after being roasted, chopped, maimed and tortured to no end – is *still* alive. To celebrate, the world's unluckiest Play-Doh man hosts his own retrospective of clips from his birth on *Saturday Night Live* to his recent theatrical debut in *Mr. Bill Goes to Washington*, which was tacked on to an Ernest feature.

Though much of Mr. Bill's "adventures" have been seen many times before (with much of the *SNL* shorts compiled onto Starmaker's 1993 release *The Mr. Bill Collection*), this tape is well-balanced with new and rare footage. A bulk of the first half is comprised of Mr. Bill's shows from the early days of cable, including "Safety Tips" and "Cooking with Mr. Bill," in which our hapless hero is microwaved. In a parody of sports shows, Mr. Bill goes deep-sea diving, mountain climbing, hangliding and Bigfoot hunting, all with disastrous results.

Clocking in at around 40 minutes, this tape is a real treat. Only a slide presentation on Mr. Bill ancestors holds no repeat value. Spot and Miss Sally are on hand to help Mr. Bill commemorate his anniversary, as well as that pair of no-goodniks, Sluggo and Mr. Hands. You can't help but feel sorry for Walter Williams' enduring creation as you laugh at his misfortunes.

Terror in the Aisles
(1984)
MCA/Universal Home Video
★★★★☆

Horror movies get the clip-a-minute tribute treatment in *Terror of the Aisles*, which actually got a wide theatrical release back in its day. Slasher flick vets Donald Pleasance (he of the breathy line delivery) and Nancy Allen (she of the Farrah hair) host this homage to that most underrated of all film genres. While you know going in that you're going to be treated to a mixed bag, the fun lies in sorting it all out.

Particular attention is paid to the likes of *Halloween*, *Psycho*, *Jaws*, *The Exorcist* and other classics, while eyebrows are raised at the inclusion of such non-horror films as *Klute*, *Nighthawks* and *Vice Squad*. Loosely arranged thematically (i.e., sex, bad guys, being alone), it has its share of spurts and sputters. The whole thing really picks up toward the end during a brief bit on the hokiest entries in horror, including *Konga*, *Nightwing* and *The Thing with Two Heads*.

Bikini Drive-In
(1994)
Bullseye Video
★☆☆☆☆

Armed with a camera, people off the street and probably $8.95, the notorious Fred Olen Ray directed *Bikini Drive-In*, the latest in a thin string of 85-minute wonders involving women coming into possession of a failed business, only to resurrect it using their comely charms. In this case, horse-faced Ashley Rhey inherits her grandfather's drive-in, which plays family nature films and, thus, earns a keep of only $20 a night.

In order to save the drive-in from evil creditors, Rhey and her surgically enhanced pals sport bikinis and show Fred Olen Ray movies. Carloads of horny teens arrive in droves. Tops are removed. Dollars are exchanged. Sex is had. Yet, at no point in the film does any person actually act.

The first half of this movie is as slow-going as Rose Kennedy in the Boston Marathon, especially with Rhey's padded dialogue, which she takes *extra slow* so as not to make a blunder. (Example: "What *are* we going to do this summer?...I mean, *I'm* not going to summer school....*You're* not going to summer school....What *are* we going to do?") Only when the drive-in opens is one's attention even slightly stimulated. Olen's use of fake trailers (*Gator Babes*) and movies (including deleted scenes from *Attack of the 60 Foot Centerfold*) is the only hint of fun to be found. The script's idea of a climax has the fat-assed sheriff getting whipped by a dominatrix, the kind of banal fodder that fueled the *Porky's* trilogy.

The Killer B's
(1991)
Wombat Film and Video
★★☆☆☆

This 27-minute show on low-budget films is more like a primer on the subject for people who have never seen such movies. Hosted by a scary man and a scarier woman (with such distinctions made by personality alone), a good half of it is devoted to clips from *Plan 9 from Outer Space*. Nice, but that's been overdone.

Clips are shown from *The Cosmic Man*, *Monster from Green Hell* and *Teenage Monster*, but the fun starts with the inclusion of the more recent, color Z-grade movies, like *The Day It Came to Earth* and *Alien Factor*.

The hosts make dumb-ass comments and think they're pretty darn witty. However, they are idiots.

Mars Needs Women
(1968)
Orion Home Video
★★★☆☆

Earth collectively shudders before the awe-inspiring might of former Mouseketeer Tommy Kirk, leader of a Martian group that's come to our fair planet in order to get better acquainted with the fairer sex. The reason? Mars, you see, has a critical shortage of females, and the men are getting pretty darn horny!

But instead of plucking the women at random from the general population, the Martian men must choose their future mates carefully according to the strictest of guidelines. From the looks of some of their choices – an airline stewardess, a college homecoming queen, an exotic dancer – I think we can pretty much gather the particulars of the criteria. If they can't win over a selected subject the old-fashioned way, they simply resort to hypnosis – a pretty good idea, given their homely looks and utter lack of charm.

Everything seems to be going according to plan, but Tommy almost botches the entire expedition when he falls for Yvonne "Batgirl" Craig. She's a doctor specializing in "space medicine" (or some such) who, in turn, falls hard for Tommy's robotic delivery.

The one thing I found interesting about this otherwise ridiculous made-for-TV cheapie from schlockmeister Larry Buchanan (*The Eye Creatures*) is that, in many ways, these Martians are just real regular guys at heart. I mean, they select young and beautiful girls for breeding, they rob a gas station when they need money and steal a car when they need transportation. Typical college frat hijinks if you ask me, hardly worthy of the global scare it produces.

Thank you Larry, for your insightful views on universal brotherhood. —*CH*

This Is Spinal Tap (uncut version)
(1984)
bootleg
★★★★★

Whoever said you can have too much of a good thing was obviously no *Spinal Tap* fan.

Perhaps no film in recent years has been as heavily quoted or has inspired such fierce loyalty among its fans, and with almost three and a half hours of outtake footage, this hard-to-find bootleg gives Tapheads what they crave most: more of "one of England's loudest bands" than you can shake the proverbial stick at.

While some of the footage here is undeniably dull, I found myself gasping at many of the things that ended up on the cutting room

floor. How could someone think that a high Bruno Kirby, clothed only in his underwear and a single black sock, singing Sinatra into a pizza-slice microphone isn't funny? Or what about the guy who wants the band to autograph his *Train Sounds* record because he loves to listen to it simultaneously with his Tap albums, preferably when his parents go out of town for a transfusion?

And that's just for starters. Entire subplots were jettisoned for the final cut, and though some of these aren't particularly funny, they are nonetheless of interest to *Tap* aficionados like myself, who actually care how David and Nigel got those suspicious looking sores.

One of the best things about this version is getting to see many of the now-classic scenes from the finished product with generous amounts of additional footage. I found not even five full minutes of the band trying to find the stage in Cleveland to be enough, and the explosive argument between Nigel and David at Rainbow Trout Studios here reaches histrionics of an almost cartoon proportion as it continues for nearly 10 expletive-riddled minutes. We also get to see the guys insisting that Derek learn how to "project" more to his audience, that he has a "crater where a mountain should be." This is followed by Derek instructing a roadie on the preparation of the fateful zucchini. And if that's not enough, I urge you to consider the following three words: *more Artie Fufkin.*

After viewing this in its entirety, I found myself marveling even more at the pacing and consistently high level of humor that runs throughout the final, 82-minute theatrical release. Given the mammoth amount of truly inspired footage, director Rob Reiner and company certainly did an amazing job of trimming this down to fighting weight while keeping some sense of continuity about the proceedings.

This is indispensable viewing. If, God forbid, you've never seen *This Is Spinal Tap*, stop whatever you're doing and proceed immediately to the dollar section of your friendly neighborhood video store. They come none more funny than this, mate. —*CH*

Sorceress
(1982)
Thorn-EMI Home Video
★★★★☆

Leigh and Lynette Harris, two of the dumbest blondes to ever land acting jobs, star as the offspring of an evil sorcerer who seeks to sacrifice them in order to gain brownie points with the gods. Whisked away as infants by a good sorcerer, the two are raised as boys so as to lessen their chances of being discovered. Years pass and everyone just assumes these lads have exceptionally high squeaky voices, shapely legs and enormous pecs that bounce around and pop out a lot.

After their village is burned and their foster parents killed, a mentor arrives in the form of a redneck Viking named Baldar. (*Note:* At no time does any character get even remotely close to an authentic Medieval accent.) One day, Baldar's sidekick, a naughty satyr, watches the "lads" frolicking nude in a lake. "What's that which he carries there, hanging between his legs?" they ask. Deciding it must be a weapon of some sort, they attack, soundly kicking some goat-man butt.

Later, Baldar attempts an awkward explanation of the birds and the bees: "Do you know where babies come from?" he asks. This embarrassing sex-ed session is broken up by perhaps the first recorded instance of a Medieval battle sequence featuring gorillas armed with laughing gas, as Baldar and the buxom lads attempt to fend off their attackers while laughing hysterically.

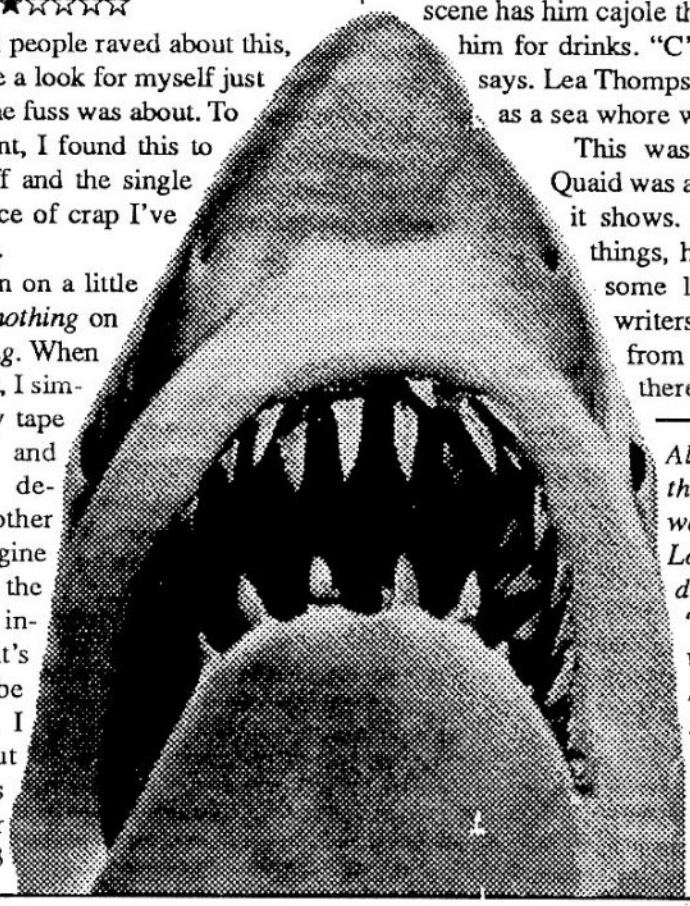
Later, while one sister receives hands-on instructions about the differences between boys and girls, the other begins to writhe and moan uncontrollably back at the campsite. This classy touch goes on for a *long* time and, like many moments in this thoroughly inept piece of cinema, is impossible not to laugh at.

For the grand finale, there's an incomprehensible battle involving a zombie army, a couple of lame gods who float around pretty much doing nothing and lots of cartoonish special effects. So much sound and fury, signifying nothing, save perhaps the director's inability to think of further excuses for the Harris sisters to take off their clothes. —*CH*

VCR Tape Cleaning Kit
(1994)
Maxell Corporation of America
★☆☆☆☆

After several people raved about this, I decided to have a look for myself just to see what all the fuss was about. To be perfectly blunt, I found this to be a total rip-off and the single most boring piece of crap I've ever sat through.

I'll let you in on a little secret: There's *nothing* on this tape. *Nothing*. When I first watched it, I simply assumed my tape was defective and took it back, demanding another copy. Well, imagine my shock when the Suncoast clerk informed me that it's *supposed* to be this way. Sure, I know all about John Cage's "4:33" — four minutes and 33 seconds of silence — but that was just a joke, right?



Being an open-minded video critic and all, I knew I should not condemn anything that I did not fully understand, so I watched it again...and again...and again. Stylistically, I still don't know whether to call this minimalism, expressionism, post-modernism or what, but I feel it's definitely European in origin, most likely a product of post- WWII Germany. At any rate, it fails to execute any of the three essential classical compositional elements: exposition, development and conclusion — and as such, can hardly be considered a film at all.

My copy came with a small bottle of a suspicious-looking fluid that is perhaps some sort of hallucinogen, and while this piece of garbage could definitely use some enhancing, I don't think drugs are the way to go. If you're thinking about picking this stinker up, please, just say no. —*CH*

Jaws 3
(1983)
MCA/Universal Home Video
★★☆☆☆

Unless you saw this in its theatrical 3-D format, this movie sucks. After a pretty decent Part 2, Universal followed up with this thoroughly pedestrian effort.

Playing one of Roy Scheider's grown children, Dennis Quaid has the hots for Bess Armstrong, the wetsuited biologist who works with dolphins at Sea World. The great white gets into the park and chases skiers and divers, and even gives birth.

Louis Gossett Jr. spends the movie in front of a microphone as the park's head. His best scene has him cajole the press into joining him for drinks. "C'mon, dey free!" he says. Lea Thompson has an early role as a sea whore with bad hair.

This was made back when Quaid was a big coke freak, and it shows. From the looks of things, he may have passed some lines around to the writers and director. Aside from a severed arm bit, there's not much here.

All videos reviewed in the Videos *section were written by Rod Lott, except those denoted with a "CH," which were written by Chris Henry. Rod wishes to emphasize that the review of the* VCR Tape Cleaning Kit *is not his work.*

reeL Cheese

Steven Seagal: Hard to Act

Steven Seagal (that's *Mr.* Seagal to you) first burst upon the silver screen in 1988's *Above the Law*, all because he was Mike Ovitz's former bodyguard.

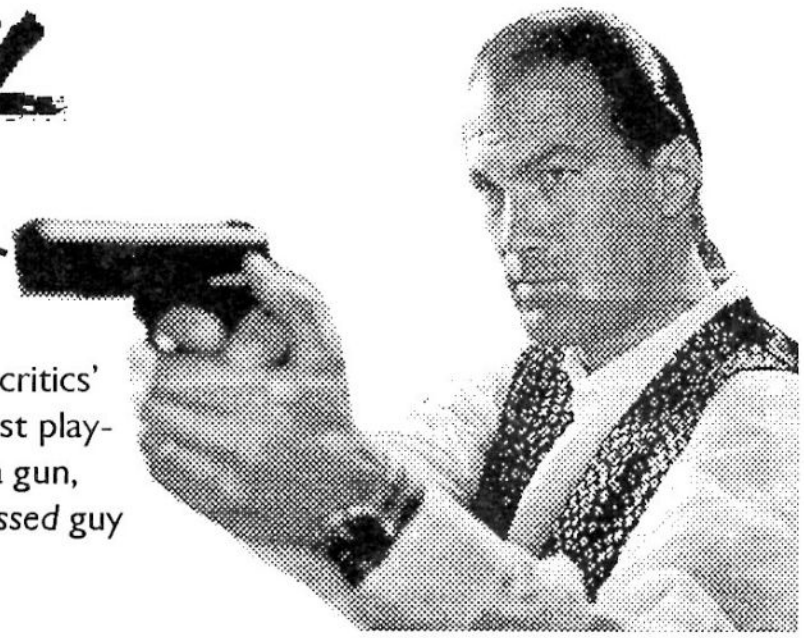
Yet it was in his next two films, *Hard to Kill* and *Marked for Death* (both 1990), when the pony-tailed stoneface came into his own as an actor. Still two full years before his breakthrough smash in *Under Siege*, Seagal showed promise of a long and fruitful film career.

Using these two films as a watermark, we will now trace Seagal's ever-progressing depth as a thespian. See if you don't agree.

—Rod Lott

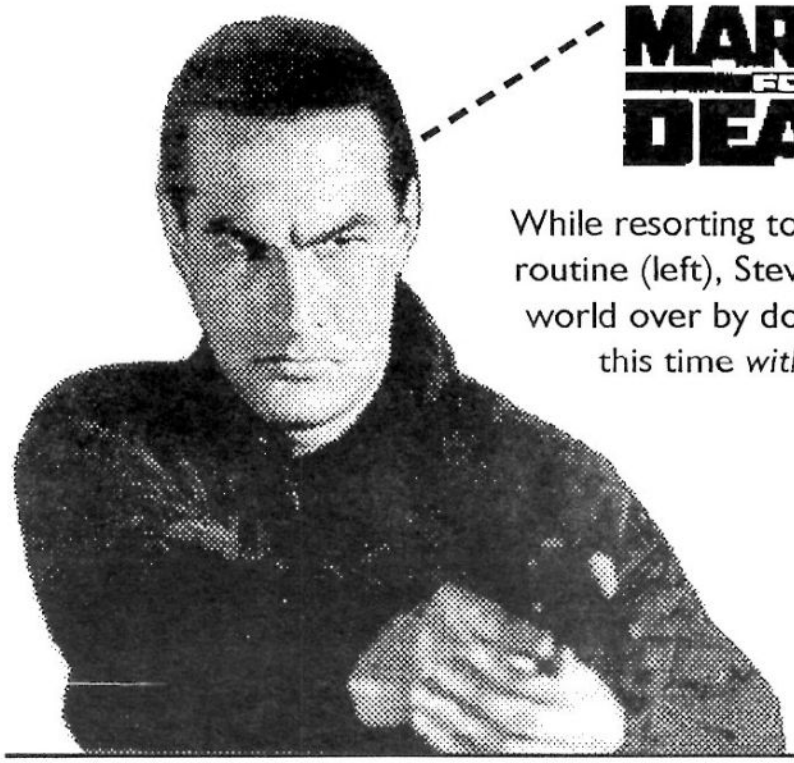
Instead of simply hitting the bad guy, Steven heightened the drama by first grabbing the ruffian's jacket while clenching his own teeth.

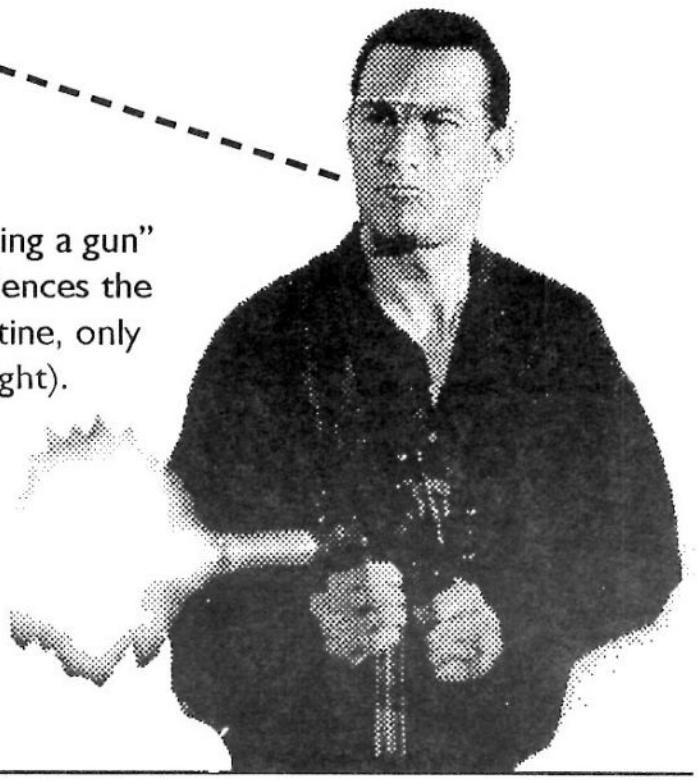
Hard To KILL



Steven further put his critics' scoffs to rest by not just playing the guy who fires a gun, but the *impeccably dressed* guy who fires a gun.

MARKED FOR DEATH





While resorting to his old "I'm holding a gun" routine (left), Steven surprised audiences the world over by doing the same routine, only this time *with safety glasses* (right).

FLICKS

TOY STORY

Well, whaddaya know? Disney *can* make a non-musical cartoon! And not only is it thoroughly engaging, it's a landmark. As the world's first totally computer-animated feature film, *Toy Story* (Walt Disney) amazes as it entertains.

Tom Hanks lends his voice to Woody, a cowboy doll who is the unofficial leader of a boy's room full of playthings. Their secure world is rocked with the new arrival of Buzz Lightyear (Tim Allen), a technologically advanced spaceman whose whirring gizmos threaten to outdate them. Surprisingly, the story works, proving more than able to sustain itself over the film's entire running time.

Though this is obviously aimed at kids, adults may enjoy it even more. As Mr. Potato Head, Don Rickles serves up a fair share of double entendres, with help from a witty script that keeps yielding surprises. In particular, an encounter with aliens in a pizza palace elicits a few well-earned laughs. Even the chase scene – long a tired gimmick – is infused with a sense of refreshing liveliness.

As expected, the animation is flawless. No detail has been spared, as several background in-jokes attest, and the overall effect is flat-out astonishing. No doubt about it, this piece of work is a ground-breaker, and even if its technique one day becomes antiquated, *Toy Story* will be loved for generations.

THE CROSSING GUARD

Sean Penn directs like he acts, which in itself is a mixed blessing. On screen, the man can amaze (*Fast Times at Ridgemont High*) or embarrass (*We're No Angels*). His sophomore effort as a filmmaker, *The Crossing Guard* (Miramax), has instances of both extremes.

The seemingly simple story of a man vowing to take the life of the soon-to-be-released drunk driver who killed his daughter, *Guard*'s ace-in-the-hole star Jack Nicholson lets us know that things are bound to get complicated. When not counting squares on a calendar, Nicholson spends his time drowning his sorrow in glasses of booze and laps of strippers. A beefy David Morse portrays the reformed prisoner who can't quite come to terms with his lingering guilt. His new lease on life wants him to live while his culpability veers him toward self-destruction.

Though the film ultimately arrives at a very touching conclusion, many of its emotions prior ring false. The strains between Nicholson and his ex-wife (Anjelica Huston) are not fully explained, while Morse seems too unhinged than should be expected of a man returned to freedom. While Penn clearly has a good eye, his ear for dialogue could use a tuning; a party scene in which the guests philosophize reeks of pretentiousness.

As well-crafted as some of Penn's scenes are, some deteriorate into experimental illogicality. For example, the camera captures an impromptu dance by Robin Wright when Penn suddenly shifts into slow-motion. It's as if Penn is saying, "Look at this; I'm serious," but the effect is one of "What the hell does he think he's doing?"

Regardless, I believe he has a future in directing, but I challenge him to make a film in which: a) slo-mo is not used every five minutes, and b) no one smokes.

FATHER of the BRIDE PART II

"Hey, what are we, the Schmaltz family?" chides Steve Martin to his melancholy clan in one of *Father of the Bride: Part II*'s numerous Big, Sad Moments. The answer to his question, in fact, is a resounding "Hell, *yes*," as the next scene finds Steve and daughter Kimberly Williams playing a heart-tugging game of basketball, filmed in the same kind of soft-hued, slow-motion, blended-edits techniques oft reserved for the likes of soft-core sex flicks on 3 a.m. cable.

And that's the main problem with this dreadful sequel (Touchstone) to the mediocre 1991 hit: It forever contradicts itself. Much talk is made about Kimberly and her husband having no money and living in a shack; when we finally see said shack, all two stories of it are exquisitely furnished. Steve fusses repeatedly about being "an average Joe" who likes "the simple life," and yet when he brings home take-out, he does so in those nifty, thick bags with handles used only by the most expensive department stores.

It is quite clear that the vapid writer-director-producer team of Charles Shyer and Nancy Meyers comes from comfortable backgrounds and has no idea what life is really like. In their world, everything is perfect, spotless and easily resolved. As with the first film, I couldn't relate to any of the characters and, thus, felt like I was being talked down to the entire time. No greater evidence of this elitist pandering exists than the ugly scene in which the young married couple discusses what to name their impending bundle of joy; if they're not going to hyphenate the baby's last name, they've come up with some "alternative" last names using letters from both sides of the family. The whole thing smacks of snobbery. What is this, *Father of the Ultra-Liberal New-Age Yuppie Bitch*?

Maybe the success of the first film allowed the Shyer-Meyers Manipulation Crew to have free reign with this follow-up; that's my only guess given the haphazard condition of what they pass off as the script. A subplot about selling the house serves no purpose whatsoever, except to get Steve over to the in-laws' home, where he can again have funny encounters with the abode's foaming Dobermans.

Only Martin Short livens the thing up with his brief appearance, while Martin has maybe two funny moments, both physical. Here, he earns my sympathy, not because of his character's middle-age crisis, but because his numerous talents as a comic actor go unutilized. Nearly 10 years ago, Martin was turning out one great film after another. If he can distance himself from the Shyer-Meyers Stratagem Troupe, he may find himself returned to such a position.

Bride's nest of WASPs

The story, as it is, has both mom and daughter simultaneously pregnant, which is a red flag for "sitcom predictability" as anything. Along the way, several principals face various Tough Moments before All Is Well at film's end. *Father of the Bride: Part II* may have a lot of ground to cover, but the audience is always 110 minutes ahead of it. As if you need to be told, Steve ends up with another daughter, paving the way for *Part III*, of which I won't be attending.

LEAVING LAS VEGAS

Leaving Las Vegas (United Artists) is the darkest, bleakest, coldest, most depressing movie of the year. It's also one of the best.

For reasons unexplained, jobless divorcee Ben (Nicolas Cage) calls it quits and heads to Nevada's Sin City with one objective: Drink himself to death. Holing himself up in a cheap hotel, he calls upon a hooker for platonic company. As played by Elisabeth Shue, Sera (whose name aptly recalls the song "Que Sera, Sera") ends up falling in love with the lost soul. Her feeling are returned as the two begin an already doomed relationship, with the understanding that she never ask him to quit drinking.

She agrees, and all that follows a truly wrenching portrait of two of the most pathetic people desperate for one another. Cage, long underrated, simply amazes. His performance evokes much pity as his alcohol-fueled outbursts – which, in an ordinary Cage film, would garner laughs – spell out the depths of his sadness. In a far cry from her *Adventures in Babysitting*, Shue is nothing short of a revelation. The two give the richest performances of their careers, and should be duly rewarded.

Directed with first-rate style by Mike Figgis, *Leaving Las Vegas* is one of those rare gems that renews one's faith in Hollywood. Every now and then, it produces something so smart and emotional that lingers in your mind long after it's unspooled. This is one of those films, impossible to shake.

FOUR ROOMS

Four of independent film's giants come together to craft an anthology like no other. The end result, the hilarious *Four Rooms* (Miramax), is part fantasy, part farce, adding up to a wholly satisfying whole.

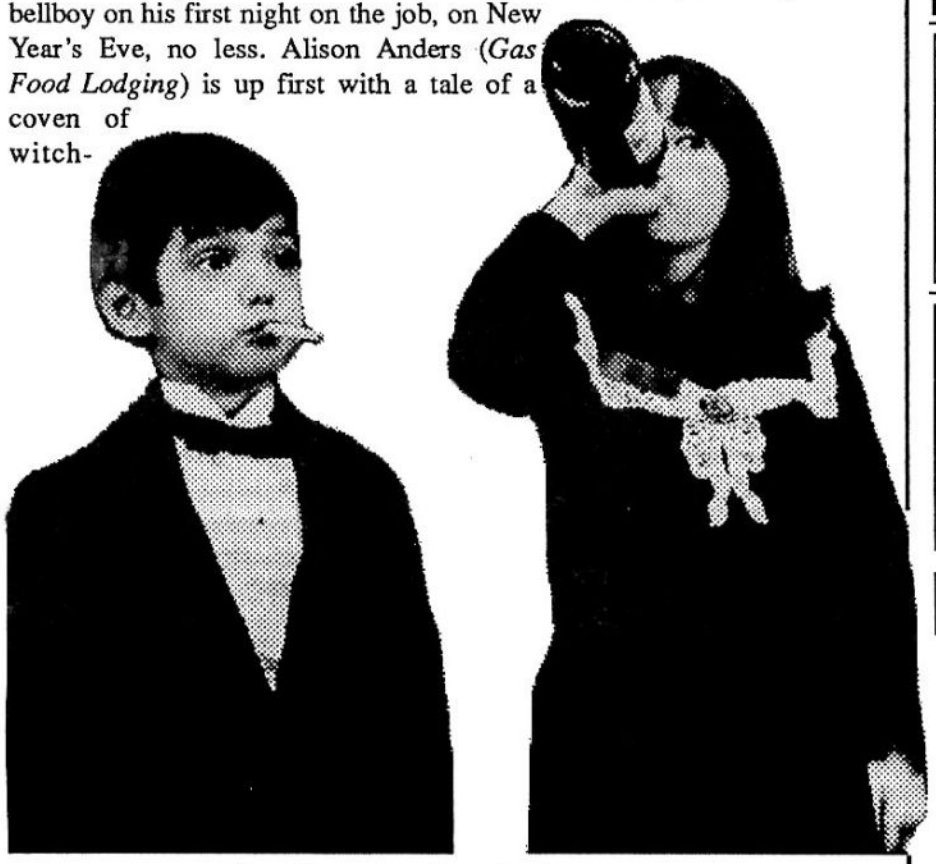
All four segments star a wonderful Tim Roth as Ted, a twitchy hotel bellboy on his first night on the job, on New Year's Eve, no less. Alison Anders (*Gas Food Lodging*) is up first with a tale of a coven of witch-es meeting in the honeymoon suite to perform a ritual in hopes of resurrecting their goddess. When Ione Skye forgets the sperm, Roth is seduced. While this story has its moments, it's the one of the bunch that could have been dropped.

Following is Alexandre Rockwell's (*In the Soup*) tale of a married couple's psychosexual games, into which Roth becomes inadvertently intertwined. With a couple of big laughs, Rockwell twists a few film conventions to stand out.

Best of all is Robert Rodriguez's story, which has Roth babysitting two pint-sized troublemakers as their parents take off for a night of revelry. Rodriguez smartly avoids the *Home Alone* approach, instead opting for a knowing buildup that ends in a riotous sequence. After this and *Desperado*, Rodriguez may be a better director than Quentin Tarantino.

And it's Quentin who closes the film with an odd premise too complex to be explained here. Suffice to say, Quentin pads his tale with rambling monologues, only to redeem himself with a huge payoff in the film's final scene.

Featuring small roles by Madonna, Bruce Willis, Antonio Banderas and Marisa Tomei, *Four Rooms* is a real treat – one that demands a second viewing. The real star is not the directorial team, but Roth, whose portrayal of the bellboy is a remarkable display of physical comedy. Humiliated and happy, Roth plays it all and emerges a comic gift.



Four's pair of misbehavers

Brad's Quick Picks

Since I don't have the time to attend *all* the screenings scheduled, my brother Brad, who likes *anything* free, graciously stepped in...

JUMANJI

"Despite an African title, this was a good epic with lots of funny monkeys. Robin Williams did his usual annoying spiels. I'm frightened I find Bonnie Hunt attractive."

NIXON

"It just amazes me how any actor can go through an entire movie – much less a three-hour movie – pretending he has buck teeth."

TOM AND HUCK

"What a delightful comedy for the kids. It made me giddy. That *Home Improvement* boy Jonathan Taylor Thomas, however, needs his head bashed in."

...as well as my dad...

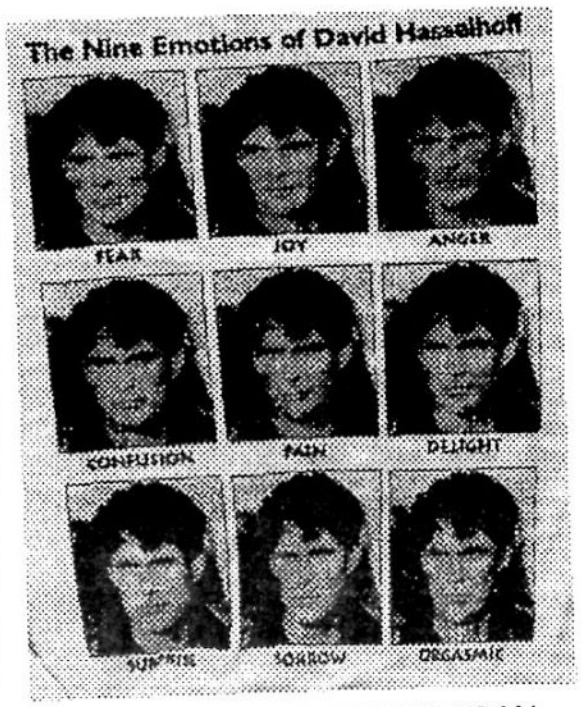
Sabrina

"I enjoyed it. It was really pretty good. It was funny. It had three airplanes in it: a Gulfstream, the Concorde and a helicopter. They were always going places."

Hell, if you think I look dapper now, you should see me in my **HITCH** *T-shirt!**

*UNPAID, UNBIASED OPINION

That's right! **The first-ever HITCH T-shirt is *now* available! On the front (approximately covering your left nipple) is the fancy HITCH logo (complete with the little guy, as seen on pg. 43), and on the back, the nine emotions of David Hasselhoff. For the record, those emotions are fear, joy, anger, confusion, pain, delight, surprise, sorrow and orgasmic...and damned if he doesn't look the same on all of them! Inexpensively priced at $12 a pop (plus $3 S&H), the stylish HITCH T-shirt is printed on high-quality, 100% cotton Hanes Beefy-Ts! Ink is black on ash shirts. Available in XL only (sorry, anorexic readers).**



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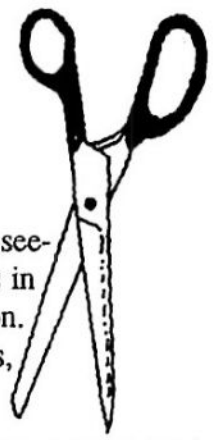

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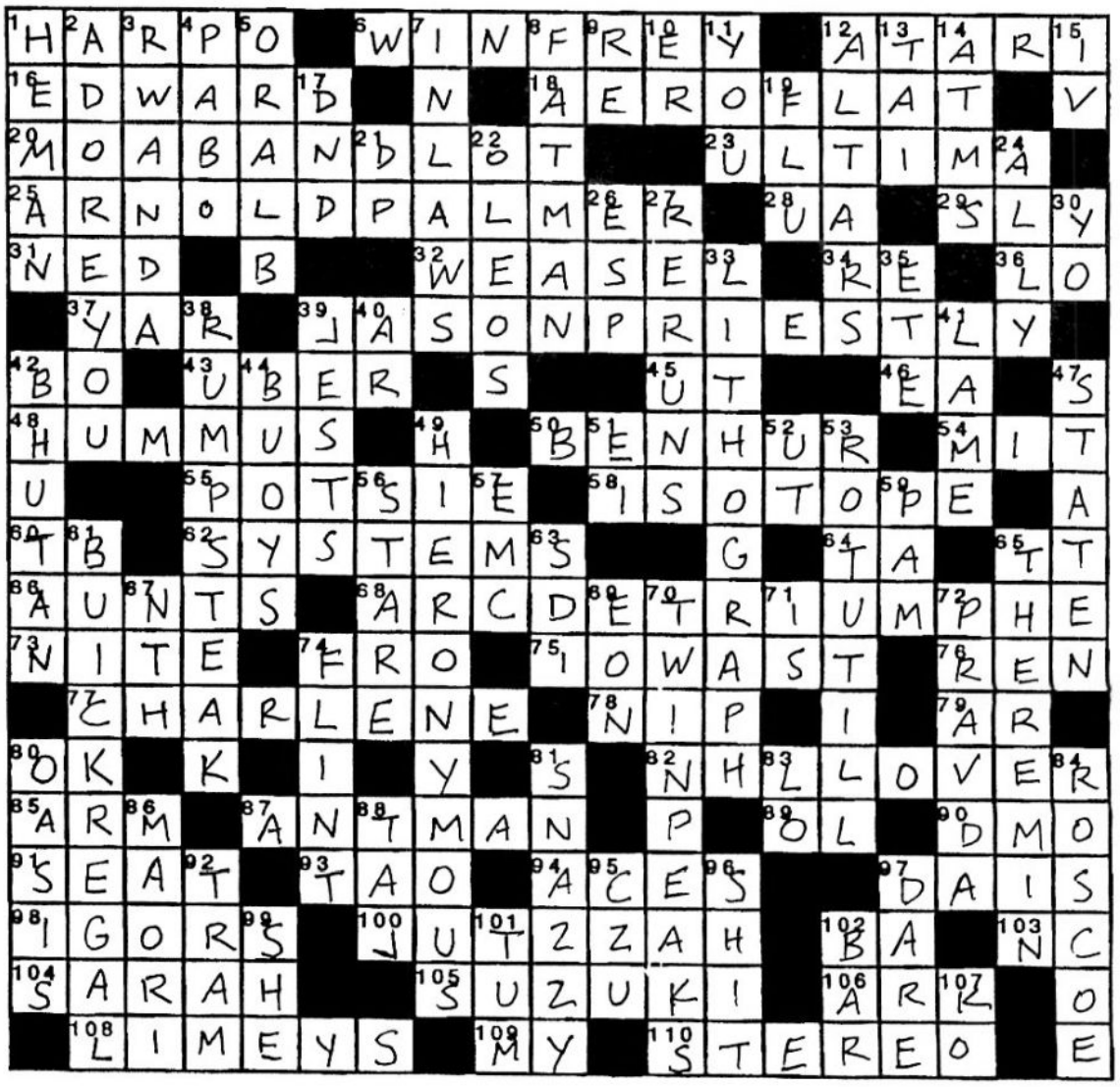
SOLUTION TO LAST ISSUE'S CROSSWORD



Nope. Not this issue. Go watch TV.

After, of course, you order copies of this issue's sole entry, the excellent ***Kaiju Review: The Journal of Japanese Monster Culture.*** Much better, in my opinion, than *G-Fan*, this digest-sized zine devoted to Godzilla, Ultraman and everyone in between is one fun read. The articles are well-researched and well-written, the issues are full of great art and it never takes the obsessive fanboy approach that mars most zines of this ilk. The recent #9 had episode guides to both *Johnny Sokko and His Flying Robot* and *Spectreman*, along with the latest news and reviews you're not likely to find anywhere else, or at least not this enjoyable. At a time where I thought the batch of zines I'd seen recently were not living up to their potential, this thing shows up in the mail to prove me wrong, if only for a moment. Send a much-deserved $4 (cash or MO only) to 301 E. 64th St., New York City, NY 10021.

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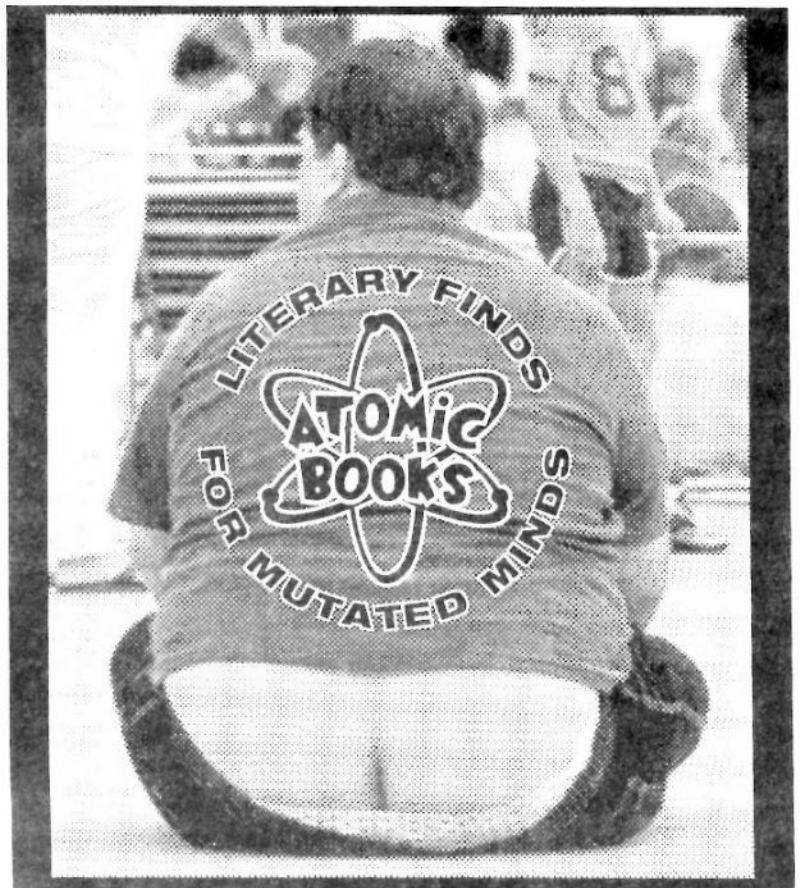

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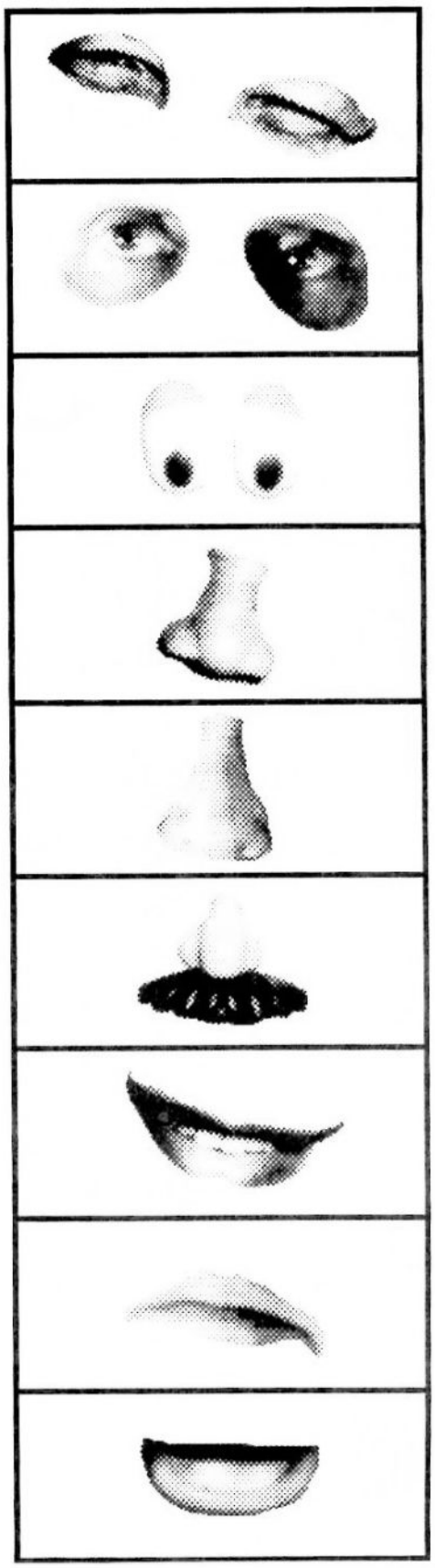
Though she'll deny having had cosmetic surgery, the *Playboy* Pam and the *Baywatch* Pam sure do look different...about $200,000 worth. Perhaps in the future, she'd be more satisfied with the features of Nelson Mandela, Christopher Walken or Mr. Potato Head? Hey, it's food for thought, so grab your scalpel and get to sculpting! Malpractice insurance is not needed to play.